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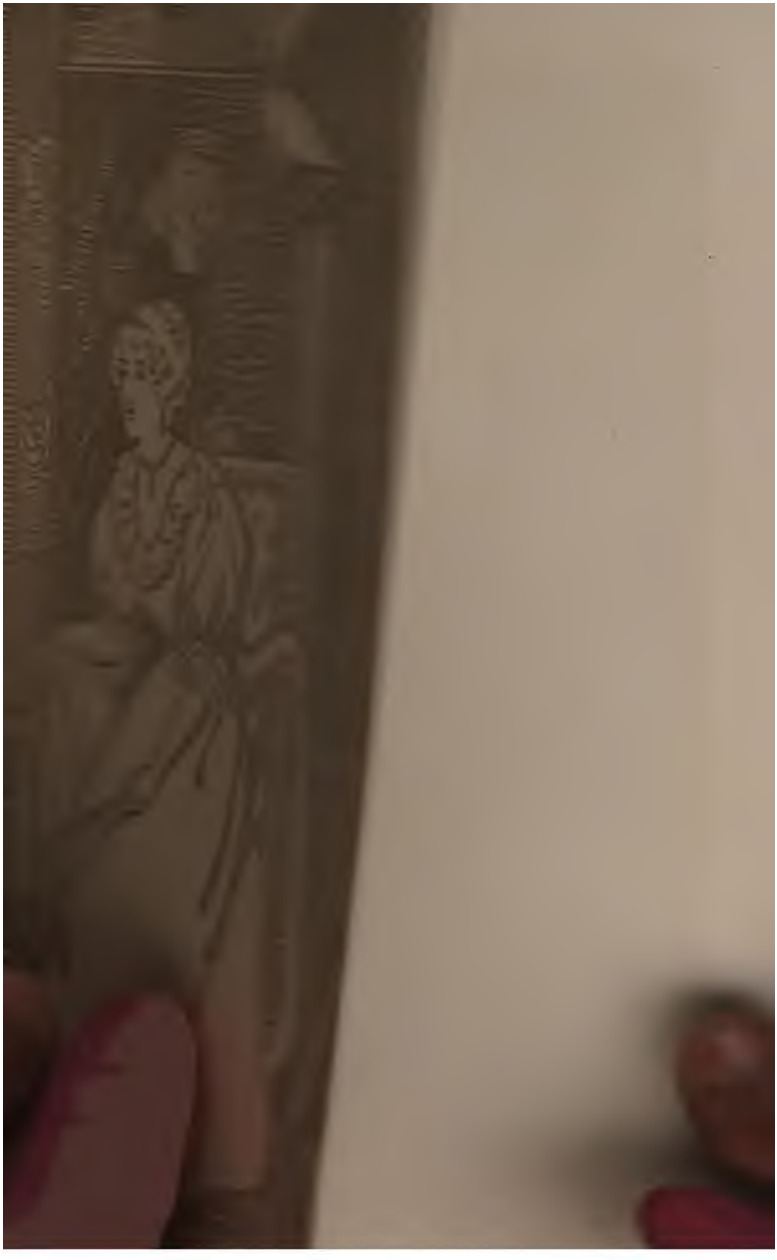

"The Rue Saint Claude, my pretty ladies?"

THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE

Volume One

The Marie Antoinette Romances, v.5

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

A CRUEL fate seemed to have ordained that from the moment that Louis XVI. and his lovely Austrian queen ascended the throne of France, the worst possible construction should be placed upon their every act, however innocent or well-meant in itself. The verdict of all investigators into the proximate causes and the course of the French Revolution — of all, that is, who can fairly make any claim to impartiality, and their name is legion — is so nearly unanimous that it has come to be a mere truism, that the unhappy king and queen were the victims of the time in which they lived; that they reaped the harvest sown by their predecessors, and that the greatest crime that can be attributed to them is lack of judgment, — a failure to appreciate and acquiesce in the inevitable trend of events.

Says Carlyle, in his essay on the "Diamond Necklace," apostrophizing Marie Antoinette: —

"Thy fault in the French Revolution was that thou wert the Symbol of the Sin and Misery of a thousand years; that with St. Bartholomew and Jacqueries, with Gabelles and Dragonnades and Parcs-aux-Cerfs, the heart of mankind was filled full, and foamed over into all-involving madness. . . . As poor peasants, how happy, worthy had ye two been! But by evil destiny ye were made a King and Queen of; and so both once more — are become an astonishment and a byword to all times."

The wrong note was struck when Louis XVI. in the first days of his reign, professing, and honestly without doubt, a purpose to institute useful reforms, and to avoid the scandals which had disgraced the closing years of his grandfather's reign, went back half a century for his Prime Minister, and unearthed the Comte de Maurepas, who had been in retirement since he was forced out of office by Madame de Pompadour, thirty years before. We can read in many places — for instance, in the "Mémoires" of the Comte de Ségur, the friend of Lafayette — the unfortunate impression that was produced by this reversion to the reactionary ideas of the last generation. The wrong note was struck, and yet it turned out to be the key-note of all that was to follow.

Let us glance now for a moment at the first occasion given by Marie Antoinette for unfriendly

criticism after she became queen. It has been described by Madame Campan, the queen's first lady-in-waiting.

It seems that the new king and queen received visits of condolence on the death of Louis XV. at La Muette, and were condoled with by a large assemblage, composed in great part of venerable dowagers with marvellous constructions in the way of head-gear, which made some of them "appear somewhat ridiculous." But the queen's dignity was equal to the occasion, and "she was not guilty of the grave fault of laying aside the state she was bound to preserve," although the kittenish behavior of one of her *dames du palais* laid her open to the charge of doing so. The Marquise de Clermont-Tonnerre, tired of standing, as her functions required, sat down on the floor, "behind the fence formed by the hoops of the queen and her ladies." There she amused herself by "twitching the dresses of the ladies, and a thousand other tricks." The queen was moved to laughter, and several times placed her fan before her face to hide her smiles, to the intense wrath of the elderly females present, who attributed her amusement to their appearance. The inevitable *chanson* appeared next day. Madame Campan remembered only the chorus, which ran thus, —

"Little Queen, you must not be
So saucy with your twenty years:
Your ill-used courtiers soon will see
You pass once more the barriers.
Fal lal la, fal lal la."

"More than fifteen years after this," says Madame Campan, "I heard some old ladies, in the most retired part of Auvergne, relating all the particulars of the day of public condolence for the late king, on which, as they said, the queen had laughed in the faces of the sexagenarian duchesses and princesses who had thought it their duty to appear on the occasion."

This incident is given at length because it is typical of the whole experience of the poor queen, whose every act and every word was perverted, and with the assistance, it must be said, of her own bad judgment and the king's, on almost every occasion was made to serve as a nail in the coffin of her popularity.

Madame Campan's pages are full of similar episodes, trivial in appearance, but really, as seen in the light of subsequent events, possessing a sinister significance. If the effects of Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre's playfulness lasted fifteen years, we may easily understand that the wretched affair which forms the groundwork of the romance contained in

these volumes had much wider and more far-reaching consequences than, taken by itself, it would seem to merit.

It should be said that the crisis of this affair of the necklace ("Affaire du Collier") came directly upon the heels of the first performances of the much discussed "Mariage de Figaro" of Beaumarchais. It had been kept off the stage for some time by the king's order, on account of divers Voltairean and levelling doctrines enunciated in it, and was finally produced, substantially unchanged, by virtue of a permit granted with the understanding that the objectionable passages had been stricken out. It was received with such thunders of applause that the king did not venture to stop it; but the author was imprisoned, and public opinion was very outspoken.

With regard to the actual facts concerning the famous necklace, it may be said, first, that they are largely shrouded in impenetrable mystery, and, secondly, that, so far as they can be deciphered with any certainty, they substantially agree with the version given by Dumas.

The materials for unravelling the very tangled thread are voluminous, consisting largely of the absolutely inconsistent statements made by the various defendants, and which form part of the records of

the trial. There is also a life of Madame de La Motte written by herself; a letter from London from the pen of Cagliostro; the memoirs of Abbé Georgel, private secretary of Cardinal de Rohan, and Madame Campan. But the most important evidence — indeed, the only really important evidence — was burned up by Abbé Georgel, in obedience to the note written by Rohan at the time of his arrest, which reached him before seals were put upon the Cardinal's papers. Other presumably damnatory documents were destroyed by Madame de La Motte before her arrest. All the existing evidence Carlyle claims, and undoubtedly with perfect truth, to have sifted and weighed carefully; and his conclusions demonstrate the impossibility of ever coming at the whole truth as to the proper apportionment of responsibility between La Motte and Rohan.

The only approach to accurate information as to the date when the necklace was put together is the statement of Madame Campan that it was originally intended for Madame du Barry, who "went into half pay"[1] in 1774, when Louis XV. died.

To the dismay of Boehmer, Marie Antoinette refused to consider the purchase of the necklace. "We have more need of seventy-fours than of

[1] Carlyle.

Necklaces," she said. For three years after that, it was hawked around among the crowned heads of Europe, but to no purpose. "The age of Chivalry is gone, and that of Bankruptcy is come." Among others, "the Portuguese Ambassador praises, but will not purchase."

At last, one day, poor Boehmer, who, as Court Jeweller, had some peculiar privileges, bursts into the queen's apartment, flings himself at her Majesty's feet, and entreats her either to buy his necklace, or give him permission to drown himself in the Seine. She coolly suggests that he might, as a possible third course, take the necklace to pieces, and dismisses him.

The foundation of the queen's dislike, almost hatred, of Cardinal de Rohan, seems to have had its origin in a despatch sent by him while he was Ambassador at Vienna, to this effect: "Maria Theresa stands, indeed, with the handkerchief in one hand, weeping for the woes of Poland; but with the sword in the other hand, ready to cut Poland in sections and take her share." D'Aiguillon, who was then minister, communicates the letter to Louis XV., and he to Du Barry, "to season her *souper*." It became a court-joke, and got to the ears of the Dauphiness, who never forgot it.

If, as seems very doubtful, the Cardinal did speak disparagingly of the princess to her mother, he must have repented it in sackcloth and ashes, for there seems to be no question as to the reality of his passion for her, dating from his return to France soon after the death of Louis XV. "Through ten long years," says Carlyle, "of new resolve and new despondency, of flying from Saverne to Paris and from Paris to Saverne, has it lasted; hope deferred making the heart sick." Meanwhile he had secured the Archbishopric (of Strasburg), the Grand Almonership, the Cardinalship, "and lastly, to appease the Jews, that fattest Commendatorship, founded by King Thierri, the Do-nothing. . . . 'All good!' languidly croaks Rohan; 'yet all not the one thing needful: alas, the queen's eyes do not yet shine on me.'

"Abbé Georgel admits, in his own polite diplomatic way, that the Mud-volcano [Rohan] was much agitated by these trials; and in time quite changed. Monseigneur deviated into cabalistic courses, after elixirs, philters, and the philosopher's stone; that is, the volcanic steam grew thicker and heavier; at last, by Cagliostro's magic (for Cagliostro and the Cardinal by elective affinity must meet), it sank into the opacity of perfect London fog."

It is said that Guiseppe or "Beppo" Balsamo, otherwise Count Alessandro di Cagliostro, in his younger days took some pains to procure from a country vicar, under the falsest of pretences, "a bit of cotton steeped in holy oils." This seemingly insignificant circumstance is given much importance by Carlyle, in his extremely searching and thorough analysis of this remarkable character, as tending to prove that there was at the bottom of his nature "a certain musk-grain of real superstitious belief." It must be said, however, that history affords but slight justification for endowing him with any of the nobler qualities which are attributed to him in these pages. From the very beginning of his career as a *gamin* in the streets of Palermo, where he was born in 1743, down to his death in prison at Rome fifty-odd years later, he seldom failed to exhibit all the distinctive traits of an impostor and a charlatan. His claim, so often touched upon by Dumas, that he had lived for several thousand years, is well illustrated by the historical fact that he was wont, when passing a statue of Christ, "to pause with a wondrously accented plaintive 'Ha!' as of recognition, as of thousand years' remembrance."

It will be remembered that, in the introduction to the "Memoirs of a Physician," Dumas mentions the Swiss Lavater as one of the prominent actors

in the mystic assemblage on Mont Tonnerre. The association between the two really existed; and the impression made by the pupil of Althotas upon the worthy and learned savant is a convincing proof of his marvellous power of imposition. Lavater said of him:—

"Cagliostro — a man such as few are; in whom, however, I am not a believer. Oh that he were simple of heart and humble, like a child; that he had feeling for the simplicity of the gospel and the majesty of the Lord! Who were so great as he? Cagliostro often tells what is not true, and promises what he does not perform. *Yet do I nowise hold his operations as deception,* though they are not what he calls them."

The problems presented by the unexampled career of this man were grappled with by Schiller, giving rise to his unfinished novel of the "Geisterseher;" and by Goethe, who relieved his mind from the hold the matter took upon it by writing the drama called the "Gross-Kophta." After wandering many years through many lands, Cagliostro found at Strasburg "the richest, inflammablest, most open-handed dupe ever yet vouchsafed him," in the person of the Prince-Cardinal Louis de Rohan, of whom the Abbé Georgel wrote that "he came at last to have no other will than Cagliostro's."

His connection with the affair of the necklace is rather problematical, except in so far as he was the confidant and mystical adviser of the Cardinal, whose hopes, founded upon his supposed correspondence with the queen, he undoubtedly nursed with his predictions of great power and influence to come by means of it.

The early history of Jeanne de Saint-Remy, by courtesy Countess, styled also of Valois, is told by Dumas with substantial accuracy, and need not be repeated here.

She married Monsieur de La Motte, a private in the Gendarmes, at Bar-sur-Aube, and dubbed him Count, by virtue of her own Countess-ship.

In 1783 she first met Rohan at Saverne, whither she went with Madame de Boulainvilliers; and there and then, so far as the workings of her ingenious mind can be followed, she seems to have formed the outline of the scheme which developed into the barefaced deception of Rohan, and the theft of the necklace.

For eighteen months after the scheme had taken shape in her brain, she carried on the fictitious correspondence with the Cardinal, assisted by Retau de Villette, an associate of her husband, "in the subterranean shades of rascaldom," and finally ventured upon the audacious deception, in which Dumas makes

Nicole Oliva Legay figure as her accomplice. That part, however, was really played by a Parisian courtesan named Essigny, known to history under the name of Gay d'Oliva, or Olisva, which was given her by La Motte, the latter form being an anagram of *Valois*.

If Madame Campan is to be credited, Marie Antoinette had never seen Madame de La Motte, but the Countess had once met one Desclos, a valet of the queen's bed-chamber, at the house of a surgeon at Versailles. This Desclos figured prominently in the deception put upon the Cardinal; for Retau de Villette personated him, or is supposed to have done so, on several momentous occasions when the Countess found it necessary to produce a duly accredited agent of the queen.

Thus, then, a bargain is arranged between Boehmer, still with a necklace for sale, and "Madame Lamotte de Saint-Remy de Saint-Shifty," as representing Monsieur de Rohan. On the 1st of February, 1785, the famous jewel was delivered to the Cardinal, who signed a receipt for it: by him it was handed over to the Countess at Versailles for transmission to the queen. A knock is heard at the door, and Monseigneur retires to an alcove whence he can see what takes place. Enters valet Desclos, alias Retau de Villette, who receives the precious casket,

with solemn injunctions and promises, and retires. "Thus softly, silently, like a very dream, flits away our solid necklace, — through the Horn Gate of Dreams."

It was taken to pieces and sold under the auspices of "Count" de La Motte, in London and elsewhere, long before the explosion.

Let us now listen for a moment to Madame Campan, as she relates the circumstances under which the explosion took place. Her narrative naïvely displays the almost incredible lack of judgment on the part of the queen, who, while she was undoubtedly free from any guilt in the transaction, seemed fated to act as if she were guilty. It will be noticed that the alleged signature of the queen, "Marie Antoinette de *France*," was in the possession of the Cardinal, and that it was made a subject of accusation against him that he should not have recognized the impossibility of the queen's having so designated herself: —

"When Madame Sophie was born, the queen told me that Monsieur de Sainte-James, a rich financier, had apprised her that Boehmer was still intent upon the sale of his necklace, and that she ought, for her own satisfaction, to endeavor to learn what the man had done with it: she desired me, the first time I should meet him, to speak with him about it, as if from the

interest I took in his welfare. I did so, and he told me he had been fortunate enough to sell it at Constantinople for the favorite Sultana. I told the queen, who was delighted to hear it, but could not understand how the Sultan came to purchase his diamonds in Paris.

"She long avoided seeing Boehmer, being fearful of his rash character.

"On the baptism of the Duc d'Angoulême in 1785, the king gave him a diamond epaulette and buckles, and directed Boehmer to deliver them to the queen. He presented them on her return from mass, and at the same time handed her a letter in the form of a petition. In this he told her that he was happy to see her 'in possession of the finest diamonds in Europe,' and begged her not to forget him. The queen read the letter aloud, and saw nothing in it but a proof of mental aberration; she lighted the paper at a wax taper standing near her, as she had some letters to seal, saying, 'It is not worth keeping.' She afterwards much regretted the loss of this enigmatical memorial.

. . . . . .

"On the 3d of August Boehmer came to me at my country house at Crespy [the first payment was to be made July 30th, but, of course, was not]. He was extremely uneasy at not having received any answer from the queen, and asked me if I had no commission for him. I told him no. . . . 'But,' said Boehmer, 'the

answer to the letter I handed her — to whom must I apply for that?' 'To nobody,' I answered; 'the queen burned it without understanding it.' 'Ah! Madame,' he exclaimed, 'that is impossible; the queen knows that she has money to pay me!'"

He then proceeded to inform her that the queen wanted the necklace, and had had it purchased for her by Cardinal de Rohan.

"'You are deceived,' I exclaimed; 'the queen has not once spoken to the Cardinal since his return from Vienna: there is not a man at Court less favorably looked upon.' 'You are deceived yourself, Madame,' said Boehmer; 'she sees him so much in private that it was to him she gave thirty thousand francs, which were paid me as an instalment: she took them in his presence out of the little secrétaire of Sèvres porcelain, next the fireplace in her room.' 'And the Cardinal told you all this?' 'Yes, Madame, himself.' 'What a detestable plot!' I cried. 'Indeed, Madame, I begin to be much alarmed, for his Eminence assured me that the queen would wear the necklace on Whit-Sunday; but I did not see it upon her, and that was why I wrote to her Majesty.'

. . . . . .

"Boehmer never said one word to me about the woman Lamotte, and her name was mentioned for the first time by the Cardinal in his answers to the interrogatories put to him before the king."

Boehmer subsequently had an interview with the queen, after he had reported to the Cardinal the result of his conversation with Madame Campan. He related to her all that he had been made to believe had taken place between her and himself through the medium of the Cardinal. He refused to listen to her denials, and kept repeating: "Madame, the time for pretending has gone by: condescend to confess that you have my necklace, and let some assistance be given me, or my bankruptcy will soon bring everything to light."

It was after this interview that the queen told the Baron de Breteuil the whole story. He was, as is well known, an inveterate enemy of Rohan, and was only too glad of the opportunity to disgrace him.

"On the following Sunday, the 15th August, being the Assumption, at twelve o'clock, at the very moment when the Cardinal, dressed in his pontifical garments, was about to proceed to the chapel, he was sent for to the king's closet where the queen was."

He was then questioned by the king, admitted that he had been duped, and produced the alleged letter from the queen, signed "Marie Antoinette de France," and offered to pay for the necklace himself. He became much confused, and made con-

tradictory statements, and was at last given into custody, but was able, as stated above, to provide for the destruction of his papers, whereby an impenetrable cloud was thrown over the whole affair. He was followed to the Bastille by Madame de La Motte and her husband, Cagliostro, Retau de Villette, and Mademoiselle Gay d'Oliva. The trial dragged through many weary months, during which unheard-of efforts were made by the family of the Cardinal as well as the clergy, even to the Pope himself, to procure for him the right to be tried at Rome. "The conduct of the king and queen," says Madame Campan, "was equally and loudly censured in the apartments of Versailles, and in the hôtels and coffee-houses of Paris." This was because they did not hush the matter up. What would have been said, had they tried to do so?

On the 31st of May, 1786, "at nine in the evening, after a sitting of eighteen hours," the Parliament of Paris solemnly pronounced judgment: —

Cardinal de Rohan goes scot-free: "Countess de Lamotte is shaven on the head, branded with red-hot iron V (*Voleuse*) on both shoulders, and confined for life to the Salpetrière; her Count wandering uncertain, with diamonds for sale, over the British Empire; the Sieur de Villette, for handling a queen's pen, is banished forever; the too queenlike Demoiselle Gay d'Oliva

(with her unfathered infant) 'put out of Court:' and Grand Cophta Cagliostro, liberated indeed, but pillaged, and ordered forthwith to take himself away."

The king, persisting in his view that the Cardinal and the woman La Motte were equally culpable, sought to restore the balance of justice by exiling the Cardinal to La-Chaise-Dieu, and suffering Madame de La Motte to escape a few days after her incarceration, thus confirming Paris in the opinion that the latter had really interested the queen herself.

"Thus," says Carlyle, "does the miserable pickle-herring tragedy of the Diamond Necklace wind itself up."

Of the romantic as distinguished from the historical portions of the "Queen's Necklace" little need be said, save that one has not far to seek in French history of the last century to find precedents in profusion for the unpaternal conduct of the elder Taverney. Andrée and Philippe are still struggling against the cruel fate which seems to have doomed them to know no part of life but its sorrows; while we are introduced for the first time to Olivier de Charny, of whom we are to see much more in the later volumes of this cycle.

To the historical characters of the story we must add Beausire, who is thus mentioned in a manu-

script note to the collection of documents published under the title of "Affaire du Collier": —

"Gay d'Oliva got married some years afterward to one Beausire, an ex-noble, formerly attached to the D'Artois household. In 1790 he was Captain of the National Guard Company of the Temple. He then retired to Choisy, and managed to be named Procureur of that Commune; he finally employed himself in drawing up lists of proscription in the Luxembourg Prison, where he played the part of informer."

Him also, and Nicole or Oliva, we shall meet again.

Once more, as the story closes, we are reminded by the apparition of the ghoul-like Marat, accompanied by the more human Robespierre, of the gradual approach of the cataclysm.

In the volumes which succeed we shall find them no longer hovering on the outskirts of the crowd, but taking a too prominent part in the world, — shaping events which are there chronicled.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1784–1785.]

Louis XVI., King of France.
Marie Antoinette, his Queen.
Comte de Provence, } brothers of the King.
Comte d'Artois, }
Comtesse d'Artois.
Duc d'Angoulême, son of Comte d'Artois.
Duc d'Orléans.
Princesse de Lamballe.
The Princess Royal.
Gustavus, King of Sweden, visiting Richelieu under the assumed name of Comte de Haga.
Prince Louis, Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France.
M. de Calonne, Minister of Finance.
Baron de Breteuil, Keeper of the Seals.
Maréchal de Castries, Minister of the Navy.
M. de Lapeyrouse, a navigator.
Maréchal de Richelieu.
Comtesse Dubarry.
Comte de Launay, Governor of the Bastille.
M. de Crosne, Lieutenant of Police.
Marquis de Favras, Captain of the Guards of Comte de Provence.
Marquis de Lafayette.
Comte Cagliostro.
Jeanne de Saint-Rémy Valois, Comtesse de La Motte.
Comte de La Motte.

M. Doillot, Madame de La Motte's counsel.
Admiral de Suffren.
Comte Olivier de Charny, his nephew, } in love with the
Chevalier Philippe de Taverney Maison Rouge, } Queen.
Andrée de Taverney, maid-of-honor to Marie Antoinette.
Baron de Taverney Maison Rouge.
Mademoiselle Oliva, formerly called Nicole Legay.
M. de Beausire, her lover.
Toussaint, son of Beausire and Oliva.
Manoel, a Portuguese adventurer.
M. Boehmer, } jewellers, in possession of the diamond necklace.
M. Bossange, }
Retau de Vilette, a journalist.
Abbé Lékel, Almoner of the Bastille.
M. de Suza, the Portuguese Ambassador.
M. Ducorneau, Chancellor of the Portuguese Embassy
M. Caron de Beaumarchais, dramatic writer.
M. Necker.
Doctor Mesmer.
Doctor Deslon, a disciple of Mesmer.
M. de Bergasse, one of Mesmer's patients.
Saint-Martin, teacher of spiritualism.
Maximilien de Robespierre.
Jean Paul Marat.
M. Breton, Clerk of the Court judging Madame de La Motte.
Marquis de Condorcet, }
Comte de Coigny, }
M. de Lauzun, }
M. de Vaudruil, }
M. de Condé, } of the French Court.
M. de Trémouille, }
M. de Penthièvre, }
Baron de Planta, }
Madame de Polignac, }

MADAME DUVAL, lady-in-waiting to Marie Antoinette.
MADAME DE MISERY, first lady of the bed-chamber.
MADAME PATRIX, lady's maid to the Queen.
DR. LOUIS, the Queen's physician.
WEBER, Marie Antoinette's coachman.
M. LÉONARD, her hairdresser.
LAURENT, a porter at the palace.
M. LENOIR, an architect.
THE MAJOR-DOMO OF MARÉCHAL DE RICHELIEU.
CLOTILDE, Madame de La Motte's servant.
ALDEGONDE, Retau de Vilette's servant.
M. FINGRET, a Paris upholsterer.
LANDRY, RÉMY, and SYLVAIN, his apprentices.
HUBERT, a keeper at the Bastille.
MADAME HUBERT, his wife.
SAINT-GEORGES, a skater.
GUYON, a turnkey at the Bastille.

PREFACE.

In the first place, *à propos* of the title I have just written, may I ask the privilege of a short explanation with my readers? For twenty years now we have been talking together; and the few lines which follow, instead of impairing our long-standing friendship, will result, I hope, in strengthening it.

Since the last words we exchanged, a revolution has come to pass: a revolution which I predicted in 1832, when I also set forth the causes which would bring it about, and described its progress down to its successful accomplishment; nay, more, — I foretold, sixteen years ago, what I should be doing eight months ago.

Let me transcribe here the concluding words of the prophetic epilogue with which I closed my book, "Gaule et France": —

"Behold the abyss in which the government of to-day will be swallowed up. The beacon we are lighting along its course will simply light it to shipwreck; for

even if it wished to tack it is too late now, — the current which hurries it along is too swift, the wind which fills its sails too strong. But when its last hour strikes, the memory of the man will overpower the stoicism of the citizen, and a voice will be heard, crying: 'DOWN WITH ROYALTY, BUT GOD SAVE THE KING!'

"That voice will be mine."

Did I prove false to my promise? Did not the only voice in all France which said adieu to an august friendship, as a dynasty fell in pieces, speak loud enough to be heard?

The revolution which I thus foresaw and foretold did not therefore find me unprepared. I saluted it as a fatal apparition, whose approach I was expecting; I hoped for nothing better; I feared it might be worse. In the twenty years that I have been overhauling the past history of nations, I have learned what revolutions are.

Of the men who made it, and those who profited by it, I have nothing to say. Every storm ruffles the water. Every earthquake brings the centre to the surface. Then, by the natural laws of equilibrium, every molecule resumes its proper place. The earth becomes solid again, and the water calm, and the sky, overcast for a space, reflects its shining stars in the everlasting deep.

The reader then will find me the same since the

14th February that I was before: one more wrinkle on my brow, a fresh scar on my heart, — those are the only changes that have taken place in me during the eight terrible months we have just passed through.

Those whom I loved, I love the same now; those whom I feared, I no longer fear; those whom I despised, I despise more than ever.

In like manner there is no more change in my writings than in myself; in them, perhaps, a wrinkle and a scar the more, — that is all.

I have up to this time written nearly four hundred volumes. I have thoroughly explored past ages, have called to live many personages who have been amazed to find themselves standing in the broad glare of publicity.

Very well! I implore all these phantoms to say if I have ever sacrificed them, their crimes, their virtues, or their vices, to draw comparisons in favor of my own generation. I have always told the truth, or what I believed to be the truth, as to the kings, the great nobles, and the people; and if the dead could call upon me as the living can, I should have no more retractations to make to the one than to the other.

To certain hearts every misfortune is sacred, every disaster worthy to be respected. Whether one falls

dead or falls from the throne, it is a pious duty to bow at the open door of the tomb and before the shattered crown.

When I wrote the title at the top of the first page of this book, it was not dictated by my unaided exercise of the right of selection; but its time had come. Chronology is inflexible: after 1774 comes 1784; after "Joseph Balsamo," the "Collier de la Reine."

But I beg the most scrupulously sensitive of my readers not to take fright; inasmuch as it is possible to tell the whole story to-day, the historian will be the censor of the poet. Have no fear of anything indelicate about the queen as a woman, or anything of doubtful propriety about her martyrdom.

Human weakness, royal pride, these we shall describe, it is true; but like the idealist painters who know how to catch only what is beautiful in the features; like the artist, Ange, who transformed his beloved mistress into a holy Madonna; between infamous pamphlets and exaggerated adulation, we shall adopt and follow, sadly and with grave impartiality, the dreamy line of poesy. She, whose pallid face was exhibited to the mob by the headsman, has dearly purchased the right to appear before posterity without a blush.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

29 November, 1848.

THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE.

PROLOGUE.

On one of the early days in April, 1784, at about quarter past three in the afternoon, our old acquaintance Maréchal de Richelieu, having with his own hands colored his eyebrows with a perfumed dye, pushed away the mirror held before him by his valet, — the successor, but not the equal, of his faithful Raftê, — and shaking his head in the manner peculiar to himself, said: "Ah, that will do very well!"

He arose from his armchair, brushing from his blue-velvet small-clothes, with a movement of the finger almost juvenile, the atoms of white powder which had floated down from his wig. Then, after taking two or three turns up and down the room, stretching his instep, and straightening his knee, "My major-domo!" said he.

In five minutes the major-domo presented himself, in full dress.

The marshal assumed a grave air, befitting the occasion. "Monsieur," said he, "I suppose you have prepared me a good dinner;"

"Most certainly, Monseigneur."

"I have sent you the list of my guests, have I not?"

"And I have carefully noted their number, — a dinner for nine, is it not?"

"There are dinners and dinners, Monsieur."

"Yes, Monseigneur, but —"

The marshal interrupted him with a slightly impatient movement, though tempered with dignity. "'But' — that is not an answer, Monsieur. Every time I hear the word 'but,' and I have heard it many times in eighty-eight years, — well, Monsieur, every time I have heard that word, I am sorry to say, Monsieur, it has preceded some folly."

"Monseigneur!"

"In the first place, at what hour are we to dine?"

"Monseigneur, the common people dine at two, the bar at three, the nobility at four —"

"And I, Monsieur?"

"Monseigneur will dine to-day at five."

"Oh, oh, at five!"

"Yes, Monseigneur, like the king."

"And why like the king?"

"Because on the list Monseigneur has done me the honor to send me, is the name of a king."

"Not at all, Monsieur, you are mistaken; among my guests to-day are none but simple gentlemen."

"Monseigneur doubtless is inclined to jest with his humble servant, and I thank him for the honor he does me; but Monsieur le Comte de Haga, who is among the guests —"

"Well, Monsieur?"

"Well, the Comte de Haga is a king."

"I know no king of that name."

"Monseigneur must pardon me, then," said the major-domo, bowing; "but I had believed, I had supposed —"

"Your business is not to believe, Monsieur; your duty

is not to suppose. What you have to do is to read the orders which I give you, without adding to them any comments. When I wish a thing to be known I tell it; when I do not tell it I wish it unknown."

The major-domo bowed again, and this time more respectfully, perhaps, than he would have bowed in talking with a reigning monarch.

"Therefore, Monsieur," continued the old marshal, "since I have only gentlemen to dinner, you will let us dine at my usual hour, four o'clock."

At this order the major-domo's face darkened as if he had heard his death-warrant. He grew pale, and bent under the blow. Then arousing himself, with the courage of despair he said: "Let come what God wills; but Monseigneur will not dine till five o'clock."

"Why, and what does that mean?" said the marshal, straightening himself up.

"Because it is a material impossibility that Monseigneur should dine earlier."

"Monsieur," said the old marshal, shaking his head haughtily, like one still young and vigorous, "it is now, I believe, twenty years since you entered my service?"

"Twenty-one years, one month, and two weeks."

"Well, Monsieur, to these twenty-one years, one month, and two weeks, you will not add a day, — not an hour. You understand me, Monsieur," he continued, biting his thin lips and knitting his dyed eyebrows; "this evening you seek a new master. I will not have the word 'impossible' pronounced in my house. I have no wish, at my age, to begin an apprenticeship to that word. I have no time to waste."

The major-domo bowed a third time. "This evening," he said, "I shall take leave of Monseigneur. But at any rate, up to the last moment my service will be performed

as it ought to be;" and he made two steps toward the door.

"What do you mean by 'as it ought to be'?" cried the marshal. "Understand, Monsieur, that things must be done here according to my will; that is the only 'ought.' Now, it is my will to dine at four, and it is against my will that you make me wait till five."

"Monseigneur," replied the major-domo, gravely, "I have served as butler to his Highness the Prince de Soubise, and as steward to his Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan. With the former his Majesty the late king of France dined once a year; with the latter his Majesty the emperor of Austria dined once a month. I know, therefore, how sovereigns should be treated, Monseigneur. King Louis XV., when he visited the Prince de Soubise, vainly called himself the Baron de Gonesse; he was always a king. In the house of Monsieur de Rohan the Emperor Joseph was vainly called the Comte de Packenstein; he was always the emperor. To-day, Monsieur le Maréchal receives a guest who vainly calls himself the Comte de Haga. The Comte de Haga is none the less the king of Sweden. I will leave the hôtel of Monsieur le Maréchal this evening; but meantime Monsieur le Comte de Haga will have been treated like a king."

"But that is the very thing that I kill myself with trying to prevent, you obstinate fellow. The Comte de Haga wishes to keep himself strictly, absolutely, unknown. *Pardieu!* I understand your absurd vanities, gentlemen of the napkin. It is not that you would honor the crown; you would magnify yourselves with our crowns."

"I do not imagine," said the major-domo, gloomily, "that Monseigneur speaks to me seriously of money."

"Eh, no, Monsieur!" said the marshal, almost ashamed. "No! Money! — who the devil said anything to you

about money? Don't evade the question, if you please. I repeat, I want nothing said about the presence here of a king."

"Why, Monsieur le Maréchal, for whom do you take me? Do you think I am blind? Why, there will not be the slightest mention of a king."

"Then do not be obstinate; let us dine at four."

"But at four o'clock, Monseigneur, what I am expecting will not have arrived."

"What are you expecting?—a fish, like Monsieur Vatel?"

"Monsieur Vatel, Monsieur Vatel," murmured the major-domo.

"Well, are you shocked by the comparison?"

"No; but for a miserable sword-thrust which Monsieur Vatel gave himself through the body, Monsieur Vatel is immortalized."

"Ah, ah, and you think, Monsieur, that your brother artist obtained glory at too cheap a price?"

"No, Monseigneur; but how many others in our profession suffer more than he did, devouring griefs and humiliations a hundred times worse than a sword-thrust, who nevertheless are not immortalized!"

"Eh, Monsieur! do you not know that to be immortalized one must be a member of the Academy or must be dead?"

"Monseigneur, if that is so it is much better for one to be alive, and do his duty. I will not die and my service will be performed as that of Monsieur Vatel would have been if Monsieur le Prince de Condé had had the patience to wait half an hour."

"Oh, now you are promising me wonders; it is adroit."

"No, Monseigneur; nothing wonderful."

"But what, then, are you expecting?"

"Monseigneur wishes me to tell him?"

"Faith, yes; I am curious."

"Then, Monseigneur, I am expecting a bottle of wine."

"A bottle of wine! explain yourself, Monsieur; the thing begins to interest me."

"Listen then, Monseigneur; his Majesty the king of Sweden — I beg pardon, the Comte de Haga I should have said — drinks nothing but Tokay."

"Well, am I so poor as to have no Tokay in my cellar? If so, I must dismiss my butler."

"Not so, Monseigneur; on the contrary, you have about sixty bottles."

"Well, do you think the Comte de Haga will drink sixty-one bottles with his dinner?"

"Patience, Monseigneur; when the Comte de Haga first visited France, while he was only Prince Royal, he dined with the late king, who had received twelve bottles of Tokay from the emperor of Austria. You are aware that the Tokay of the finest vintages is reserved exclusively for the cellar of the emperor, and that kings themselves can drink it only when he pleases to send it to them."

"I know it."

"Well, Monseigneur, of these twelve bottles, from one of which the Prince Royal drank with much satisfaction, only two remain."

"Oh! oh!"

"One is still in the cellar of his Majesty Louis XVI."

"And the other?"

"Ah, Monseigneur," said the major-domo, with a triumphant smile, — for he felt that, after the long battle he had been fighting, the moment of victory was at hand, — "the other was stolen."

"By whom?"

"By one of my friends, the late king's butler, who was under great obligations to me."

"Oh, and so he gave it to you?"

"Certainly, Monseigneur," said the major-domo, with pride.

"And what did you do with it?"

"I placed it carefully in my master's cellar, Monseigneur."

"Your master; and who was your master at that time, Monsieur?"

"His Eminence the Cardinal de Rohan."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* at Strasburg?"

"At Saverne."

"And you have sent to seek this bottle for me!" cried the old marshal.

"For you, Monseigneur," replied the major-domo, in a tone which plainly said, "ungrateful as you are."

The Duc de Richelieu seized the hand of the old servant and cried, "I beg your pardon, Monsieur; you are the king of major-domos."

"And you would have dismissed me!" he replied, with an indescribable shrug of his shoulders.

"Oh, I will pay you one hundred pistoles for that bottle of wine!"

"And the expense of bringing it here will be another hundred, that will make two hundred pistoles; but Monseigneur will admit that it is a trifle."

"I will admit anything you please, Monsieur; and meantime, from to-day I double your salary."

"But, Monseigneur, there is no occasion for that; I have but done my duty."

"And when will your hundred-pistole courier arrive?"

"Monseigneur may judge if I have lost time; on what day did I have my orders for the dinner?"

"Why, three days ago, I believe."

"It takes a courier, at his utmost speed, twenty-four hours to go, and the same to return."

"There still remained to you twenty-four hours. Prince of major-domos, what have you done with those twenty-four hours?"

"Alas, Monseigneur, I lost them! The idea came to me only the day after I received the list of your guests. Now calculate the time necessary for the negotiation, and you will perceive that in asking you to wait till five, I am asking only for the time that is absolutely necessary."

"What! the bottle is not yet here?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"Ah, Monsieur, if your colleague at Saverne is as devoted to the Prince de Rohan as you are to me, and refuses the bottle, as you would do in his place —"

"I, Monseigneur?"

"Yes; you would not, I suppose, give away such a bottle if it were in my cellar?"

"I humbly beg Monseigneur's pardon; but should a friend, having a king to provide for, ask me for your best bottle of wine, I would give it to him immediately."

"Oh!" said the marshal, with a grimace.

"It is only through helping others that we can expect help in our own need, Monseigneur."

"Then I may feel somewhat reassured," said the marshal, with a sigh; "but there is still another risk, — if the bottle should be broken?"

"Oh, Monseigneur, no man ever broke a bottle of wine worth two thousand francs!"

"I was wrong; let us say no more about it. At what time, then, do you expect your courier?"

"At four o'clock, precisely."

"Then why not dine at four?" replied the marshal, with the obstinacy of a Castilian mule.

"Monseigneur, the wine must rest for an hour; and but for an invention of my own, it would need three days."

Beaten at all points, the marshal saluted his major-domo in token of surrender.

"Besides," continued the old servant, "Monseigneur's guests, knowing that they will have the honor of dining with the Comte de Haga, will not arrive until half-past four."

"Here is still another reason!"

"Certainly, Monseigneur; the guests are the Comte de Launay, the Comtesse Dubarry, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse, Monsieur de Favras, Monsieur de Condorcet, Monsieur de Cagliostro, and Monsieur de Taverney."

"Very well?"

"Well, Monseigneur, let us take them in their order. Monsieur de Launay comes from the Bastille, and with the ice at present covering the roads he will be three hours coming from Paris."

"Yes; but he will leave immediately after the prisoners' dinner, at twelve o'clock."

"Pardon, Monseigneur, but the dinner hour at the Bastille has been changed since Monseigneur was there; it is now one."

"Monsieur, one learns something every day, and I thank you! Go on."

"Madame Dubarry comes from Luciennes, one continued descent, and in this frost —"

"That would not prevent her being punctual. Since she is now only a duke's favorite, she plays the queen only among barons. But let me tell you, Monsieur, that I desired to have dinner early on account of Monsieur de Lapeyrouse, who sets off to-night, and will not wish to be late."

"Monseigneur, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse is with the

king, discussing geography and cosmography; he will not get away too early."

"It is possible."

"It is certain, Monseigneur; and it will be the same with Monsieur de Favras, who is with the Comte de Provence, talking, no doubt, of the new play, by Monsieur Caron de Beaumarchais."

"You mean the 'Mariage de Figaro'?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"Why, you are quite literary also, it seems, Monsieur."

"In my leisure moments I read, Monseigneur."

"We have, however, Monsieur de Condorcet, who, being a geometrician, should at least be punctual."

"Yes; but he will be deep in some calculation, from which when he rouses himself, he will find that he is half an hour too late. As for the Comte de Cagliostro, as he is a stranger, and not well acquainted with the customs of Versailles, he will, in all probability, make us wait for him."

"Well," said the marshal, "you have disposed of all my guests, except Monsieur de Taverney, in a manner worthy of Homer, or of my poor Rafté."

The major-domo bowed. "I have not," said he, "named Monsieur de Taverney; because being an old friend, he will probably be punctual. I believe, Monseigneur, these eight are all the guests, are they not?"

"Precisely. Where will you have us dine, Monsieur?"

"In the great dining-room, Monseigneur."

"But we shall freeze there."

"It has been warmed for three days, Monseigneur; and I believe you will find it perfectly comfortable."

"Very well, but there is a clock striking. Why, it is half-past four!" cried the marshal.

"Yes, Monseigneur, and there is the courier entering the court-yard, with my bottle of Tokay."

"May I continue for another twenty years to be served in this manner," said the marshal, turning again to his looking-glass, while the major-domo ran downstairs.

"Twenty years!" said a laughing voice, interrupting the marshal in his survey of himself, — "twenty years, my dear Duke! I hope you may have them; but then I shall be sixty, — I shall be very old."

"You, Countess!" cried the marshal. "You are the first, and *mon Dieu!* you look as young and charming as ever."

"Duke, I am frozen."

"Come into the boudoir, then."

"Oh, *tête-à-tête*, Marshal?"

"Not so," replied a somewhat broken voice.

"Ah, Taverney," said the marshal; and then whispering to the countess, "Plague take him for disturbing us."

Madame Dubarry laughed, and they all entered the adjoining room.

At the same moment the noise of carriages in the street warned the marshal that his guests were arriving; and soon after, thanks to the punctuality of his major-domo, nine persons were seated round the oval table in the dining-room. Nine lackeys, silent as shadows, quick without bustle, and attentive without importunity, glided over the carpet, and moved among the guests, without ever touching their chairs, placed in the midst of furs, which covered to their knees the legs of those who occupied them. These furs, with the heat from the stoves, and the odors from the wine and the dinner, diffused a degree of comfort which manifested itself in the gayety of the guests, who had just finished their soup.

No sound was heard from without and none within, save that made by the guests themselves; for the plates were

changed, and the silver-ware was brought to the table without the slightest noise. Nor from the major-domo could a whisper be heard; he seemed to give his orders with his eyes. The guests, therefore, began to feel as though they were alone. It seemed to them that servants so silent must also be deaf.

Monsieur de Richelieu broke the silence by saying to the guest on his right hand, "Monsieur le Comte, you do not drink."

This was addressed to a man about thirty-eight years of age, short, fair-haired, and with high shoulders; his eye, a clear blue, was sometimes bright, but oftener melancholy. Nobility was stamped unmistakably on his open and manly forehead.

"I drink only water, Marshal," he replied.

"Excepting with Louis XV.," returned the marshal; "I had the honor of dining at his table with you, and you deigned that day to drink wine."

"Ah, you recall a pleasing remembrance, Marshal. That was in 1771; it was Tokay, from the imperial cellar."

"It was like that with which my major-domo will now have the honor to fill your glass, Monsieur le Comte," replied Richelieu, bowing.

The Comte de Haga raised his glass, and looked through it. The wine sparkled in the light like liquid rubies. "It is true, Monsieur le Maréchal," said he; "I thank you."

These words were uttered in a manner so noble that the guests, as if by a common impulse, rose, and cried, "Long live his Majesty!"

"Yes," said the Comte de Haga, "long live his Majesty the king of France. What say you, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse?"

"Monsieur le Comte," replied the captain, with the

tone, at once flattering and respectful, common to those accustomed to address crowned heads, "I have just left the king, and his Majesty has shown me so much kindness that no one will more willingly cry, 'Long live the king,' than I. But as in one hour I shall be travelling post to the seashore, to join the two ships which the king has placed at my disposal, I will ask your permission, as soon as I have left this house, to cry, 'Long life to another king,' whom I should be proud to serve, had I not already so good a master;" and raising his glass, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse bowed humbly to the Comte de Haga.

"This health that you propose," said Madame Dubarry, who sat at the marshal's left hand, "we are all ready to drink; but the oldest of us should take the lead as in parliament."

"Is it to you that this remark applies or to me, Taverney?" said the marshal, laughing.

"I do not believe —" said a new speaker, sitting opposite the marshal.

"What is it that you do not believe, Monsieur de Cagliostro?" asked the Comte de Haga, fixing his piercing look on the speaker.

"I do not believe, Monsieur le Comte," said Cagliostro, bowing, "that Monsieur de Richelieu is the senior of our party."

"Oh, that is good," said the marshal; "apparently it is you, Taverney."

"Come, now; I am eight years younger than you. I was born in 1704," returned the old nobleman.

"How rude," said the marshal, "to expose my eighty-eight years!"

"Really! Monsieur le Duc; you are eighty-eight years old?" said Monsieur de Condorcet.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes. It is a calculation easy to make,

and therefore unworthy of an algebraist like you, Marquis. I am of the last century, — the great century, as we call it. My date is 1696."

"Impossible!" cried De Launay.

"Oh, if your father were here, he would not say impossible, — he who when governor of the Bastille had me for a lodger in 1714."

"The senior in age, here, however," said Monsieur de Favras, "is the wine which the Comte de Haga is at this moment pouring into his glass."

"You are right, Monsieur de Favras; this wine is a hundred and twenty years old. To the wine then belongs the honor of proposing the health of the king."

"One moment, gentlemen," said Cagliostro, raising his eyes, beaming with intelligence and vivacity; "I claim the precedence."

"You claim precedence over the Tokay!" exclaimed all the guests in chorus.

"Assuredly," returned Cagliostro, calmly; "since it was I who bottled it."

"You?"

"Yes, I; on the day of the victory won by Montecuculli over the Turks in 1664."

A burst of laughter followed these words, which Cagliostro had pronounced with quiet gravity.

"By this calculation, you would be something like one hundred and thirty years old," said Madame Dubarry; "for you must have been at least ten years old when you bottled the wine."

"I was more than ten when I performed that operation, Madame; as on the following day I had the honor of being deputed by his Majesty the emperor of Austria to congratulate Montecuculli, who by the victory of Saint Gothard had avenged the day at Especk in Sclavonia, — a day on

which the infidels treated the imperialists so roughly, who were my friends and companions in arms in 1536."

"Oh," said the Comte de Haga, as coldly as Cagliostro himself, "you must have been at least ten years old when you were at that memorable battle."

"A terrible defeat, Monsieur le Comte," returned Cagliostro, bowing.

"Less terrible than Cressy, however," said Condorcet, smiling.

"True, Monsieur, for at the battle of Cressy, it was not only an army, but all France, that was beaten. But then this defeat was scarcely a fair victory to the English; for King Edward had cannon, a circumstance of which Philippe de Valois was ignorant, or rather which he would not believe, although I warned him that I had with my own eyes seen four pieces of artillery, which Edward had bought from the Venetians."

"Ah," said Madame Dubarry, "you knew Philippe de Valois?"

"Madame, I had the honor to be one of the five noblemen who escorted him off the field of battle," replied Cagliostro; "I came to France with the poor old king of Bohemia, who was blind, and who threw away his life when he heard that the battle was lost."

"Ah, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Lapeyrouse, "how much I regret that instead of the battle of Cressy, it was not that of Actium at which you assisted."

"Why so, Monsieur?"

"Oh, because you might have given me some nautical details, which, in spite of Plutarch's fine narration, have ever been obscure to me."

"Which, Monsieur? I should be happy to be of service to you."

"You were there, then?"

"No, Monsieur; I was then in Egypt. I had been employed by Queen Cleopatra to restore the library at Alexandria, — an office for which I was better qualified than any one else, from having personally known the best authors of antiquity."

"And you have seen Queen Cleopatra, Monsieur de Cagliostro?" said Madame Dubarry.

"As I now see you, Madame."

"Was she as pretty as they say?"

"Madame, you know beauty is only comparative; a charming queen in Egypt, in Paris she would have been only a pretty grisette."

"Say no harm of grisettes, Monsieur le Comte."

"God forbid!"

"Then Cleopatra was —"

"Little, slender, lively, and intelligent; with large almond-shaped eyes, a Grecian nose, teeth like pearls, and a hand like your own, Madame, — a fit hand to hold a sceptre. See, here is a diamond which she gave me, and which she had from her brother Ptolemy; she wore it on her thumb."

"On her thumb?" cried Madame Dubarry.

"Yes. It was an Egyptian fashion, and I, you see, can hardly put it on my little finger;" and taking off the ring, he handed it to Madame Dubarry.

It was a magnificent diamond of such fine water, and so beautifully cut, as to be worth thirty thousand or forty thousand francs.

The diamond was passed round the table and returned to Cagliostro, who, putting it quietly on his finger again, said, "Ah, I see well you are all incredulous; this fatal incredulity I have had to contend against all my life. Philippe de Valois would not listen to me when I told him to leave open a retreat to Edward; Cleopatra would

not believe me when I warned her that Antony would be beaten; the Trojans would not credit me when I said to them, with reference to the wooden horse, 'Cassandra is inspired; listen to Cassandra.'"

"Oh, but this is marvellous!" said Madame Dubarry, shaking with laughter; "I have never met a man at once so serious and so diverting."

"I assure you," replied Cagliostro, bowing, "that Jonathan was much more so. Oh, he was a charming companion; until he was killed by Saul he nearly drove me crazy with laughing."

"Do you know, Count," said the Duc de Richelieu, "if you go on in this way you will drive poor Taverney crazy; he is so afraid of death that he is staring at you with all his eyes, thinking you to be immortal. Come, frankly, are you immortal, — yes, or no?"

"Immortal?"

"Immortal."

"I cannot say, but one thing I can affirm —"

"What?" cried Taverney, who was the most eager listener.

"That I have seen all the people and events of which I have been speaking to you."

"You have known Montecuculli?"

"As well as I know you, Monsieur de Favras; and, indeed, much better; for this is but the second or third time I have had the honor of seeing you, while I lived nearly a year under the same tent with the skilful strategist of whom you speak."

"You knew Philippe de Valois?"

"As I have already had the honor of telling you, Monsieur de Condorcet; but when he returned to Paris, I left France and returned to Bohemia."

"And Cleopatra?"

"Yes, Madame la Comtesse; Cleopatra, I can tell you, had eyes as black as yours, and shoulders almost as beautiful."

"But what do you know of my shoulders?"

"They are like what Cassandra's once were; and there is still a further resemblance, — she had like you, or rather you have like her, a little black spot on your left side, just above the sixth rib."

"Oh, Count, now you really are a sorcerer."

"No, no," cried the marshal, laughing; "it was I who told him."

"And pray how do you know?"

The marshal bit his lips, and replied, "Oh, it is a family secret."

"Well, really, Marshal," said the countess, "one should put on a double coat of rouge before visiting you;" and turning again to Cagliostro, "then, Monsieur, you have the art of renewing your youth; for although you say you are three or four thousand years old you scarcely look forty."

"Yes, Madame, I do possess that secret."

"Oh, then, Monsieur, impart it to me."

"To you, Madame? It is useless, — your youth is already renewed; your age is only what it appears to be, and you do not look thirty."

"Ah! you flatter."

"No, Madame, I speak only the truth, but it is easily explained; you have already tried my receipt."

"How so?"

"You have taken my elixir."

"I?"

"You, Countess. Oh, you cannot have forgotten it. Do you not remember a certain house in the Rue Saint Claude, and coming there on some business respecting Monsieur de

Sartines? You remember rendering a service to one of my friends, called Joseph Balsamo; and that this Joseph Balsamo gave you a bottle of elixir, recommending you to take three drops every morning? Do you not remember having done this regularly until the last year, when the bottle became exhausted? If you do not remember all this, Countess, it is more than forgetfulness, — it is ingratitude."

"Oh! Monsieur de Cagliostro, you are telling me things — "

"Which were only known to yourself, I am aware; but what would be the use of being a sorcerer if one did not know one's neighbor's secrets?"

"Then, Joseph Balsamo has, like you, the secret of this famous elixir?"

"No, Madame; but he was one of my best friends, and I gave him three or four bottles."

"And has he any left?"

"Oh, I know nothing of that; for the last two or three years, poor Balsamo has disappeared. I saw him for the last time in America, on the banks of the Ohio; he was setting off on an expedition to the Rocky Mountains, and since then I have heard that he is dead."

"Come, come, Count," said the marshal, "a truce to compliments, for pity's sake! The secret, Count, the secret!"

"Are you speaking seriously, Monsieur?" asked the Comte de Haga.

"Very seriously, Sire, — I beg pardon; I mean Monsieur le Comte," and Cagliostro bowed in such a way as to indicate that his error was a voluntary one.

"Then," said the marshal, "Madame Dubarry is not old enough to be made young again?"

"No, on my conscience."

"Well, then, I will give you another subject. Here is my friend Taverney, — what do you say to him? Does he not look like a contemporary of Pontius Pilate? But perhaps he, on the contrary, is too old."

Cagliostro looked at the baron. "No," said he.

"Ah, my dear Count," exclaimed Richelieu; "if you will renew his youth, I will proclaim you a pupil of Medea."

"You wish it?" asked Cagliostro, of the host, and looking round at the same time on all assembled.

All present signified their assent.

"And you also, Monsieur de Taverney?"

"I more than any one, *morbleu!*" said the baron.

"Well, it is easy," said Cagliostro; and he drew from his pocket a small bottle, and poured into a glass a few drops of the liquid it contained. Then mixing these drops with half a glass of iced-champagne, he passed it to the baron. All eyes followed his movements eagerly.

The baron took the glass, but as he was about to drink he hesitated. Every one, on observing his hesitation, began to laugh, — so noisily that Cagliostro became impatient, and said, "Make haste, Baron, or you will waste a cordial of which each drop is worth a hundred louis d'or."

"The devil!" cried Richelieu, trying to jest; "that is even better than Tokay."

"I must, then, drink?" said the baron, almost trembling.

"Or pass the glass to another, Monsieur, that some one at least may profit by the elixir."

"Pass it to me," said Richelieu, holding out his hand.

The baron raised the glass, and decided doubtless by the delicious smell and the beautiful rose color which those few drops had given to the champagne, he swallowed the magic cordial. In an instant a kind of shiver ran through him; he seemed to feel all the old and sluggish blood

stagnant in his veins flowing toward the surface of his body; his wrinkled skin became smooth; his eyes, half-covered by their lids, opened without his will; the pupils became larger and brighter; the trembling of his hands was arrested; his voice strengthened; and his limbs recovered their former youthful elasticity. In fact it seemed as if the liquid in its descent had regenerated his whole body.

A cry of surprise, stupefaction, and admiration rang through the room. Taverney, who had been slowly chewing with his gums, began to feel famished; he seized a plate, knife, and fork, and helped himself largely to a ragoût, and then demolished a partridge, bones and all, calling out that his teeth were coming back to him. He ate, laughed, and cried for joy for about half an hour, while the others remained gazing at him in stupefied wonder; then little by little he failed again, like a lamp whose oil is burning out. First, his forehead, from which the wrinkles had disappeared, became wrinkled anew; his eyes were veiled and darkened; he lost his sense of taste; his back was bent again; his appetite departed; his knees began again to tremble.

"Oh!" he groaned, "once more, adieu to my youth!" and he gave utterance to a deep sigh, while two tears rolled over his cheeks.

Instinctively, at this mournful spectacle of the old man first made young again, and then, by contrast, seeming to become yet older than before, the sigh breathed by the old man was echoed around the table.

"It is easy to explain, gentlemen," said Cagliostro; "I gave the baron but thirty-five drops of the elixir, and he became young for only thirty-five minutes."

"Oh, more, more, Count!" cried the old man, eagerly.

"No, Monsieur; for perhaps the second trial would kill you."

Of all the guests, Madame Dubarry, who had already tested the virtue of the elixir, seemed most deeply interested while old Taverney's youth seemed thus to renew itself. As by degrees youth and life flowed through the arteries of the old man, the eyes of the countess eagerly followed the changes in his appearance. She laughed and applauded, and appeared regenerated simply by watching him.

When the success of the elixir was at its height the countess was about to seize the hand of Cagliostro, for the purpose of snatching from him the precious bottle. But at the moment when Taverney became old again, so much more suddenly than he had become young, "Alas! I see plainly," said she, sorrowfully, "all is vanity and deception; the effect of this marvellous secret lasts thirty-five minutes."

"That is to say," said the Comte de Haga, "in order to resume your youth for two years, you would have to drink a river."

Every one laughed.

"No," said Condorcet, "the calculation is simple; as thirty-five drops last thirty-five minutes, it would require only a mere nothing of three million one hundred and fifty-three thousand drops for one year's youth."

"An inundation," said Lapeyrouse.

"However, Monsieur," continued Madame Dubarry, "according to you, I have not needed so much; as a small bottle of about four times the size of that you hold, given me by your friend Joseph Balsamo, has been sufficient to arrest the march of time for ten years."

"Precisely, Madame, and you alone approach this mysterious truth. The man who has already grown old

needs this large quantity to produce an immediate and powerful effect; but a woman of thirty years, like you, Madame, or a man of forty years, — which was my age when I began to drink this elixir, — still full of life and youth, needs but ten drops at each period of decay; and with these ten drops may eternally continue life and youth at the same point of attractiveness and force."

"What do you call the periods of decay?" asked the Comte de Haga.

"The natural periods, Monsieur le Comte. In a state of nature man's strength increases until he is thirty-five years of age. It then remains stationary until forty; and from that time forward it begins to diminish, but almost imperceptibly until fifty; then the process becomes quicker and quicker to the day of his death. In our state of civilization, when the body is weakened by excess, cares, and maladies, increase of strength is arrested at thirty years; the failure begins at thirty-five. The time, then, to take Nature is when she is stationary, so as to combat the tendency to decay at the very moment when it begins to operate. He, who, possessing as I do the secret of this elixir, knows how to seize the happy moment, will live as I live, — always young, or at least always young enough for what he has to do in the world."

"Oh, Monsieur Cagliostro!" cried the countess, "why, if you could choose your own age, did you not stop at twenty years instead of at forty?"

"Because, Madame," said Cagliostro, smiling, "it suits me better to be a man forty years old, healthy and vigorous, than a raw youth of twenty."

"Oh!" said the countess.

"Doubtless, Madame," continued Cagliostro, "at twenty years of age one pleases women of thirty years; at

forty years we govern women of twenty and men of sixty."

"I yield, Monsieur," said the countess, "for you are a living proof of the truth of your own words."

"Then I," said Taverney, piteously, "am condemned; it is too late for me!"

"Monsieur de Richelieu has been more skilful than you," said Lapeyrouse, naïvely, with the frankness of a sailor; "and I have always heard that he had a certain receipt —"

"It is a report that the women have spread," laughed the Comte de Haga.

"Is that a reason for disbelieving it, Count?" asked Madame Dubarry.

The old marshal colored, — a rare thing for him, — but replied, "Do you wish, gentlemen, to have my receipt?"

"Oh, by all means!"

"Well, then, it is simply to take care of yourself."

"Oh, oh!" cried all.

"I would contest the receipt," continued the countess, "if I had not seen the effect of that of Monsieur de Cagliostro. So be on your guard, Monsieur the Sorcerer; I am not yet through with my questions."

"Well, Madame."

"You said that when you used your elixir of life for the first time, you were forty years old?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And that since that time, — that is, since the siege of Troy —"

"A little before, Madame."

"You have always remained forty years old?"

"You see me now."

"But, then, Monsieur," said Condorcet, "you prove to us more than your theorem requires."

"What do I prove to you, Monsieur le Marquis?"

"You prove, not only the perpetuation of youth, but the preservation of life; for if since the siege of Troy you have been always forty years old, you have never died."

"True, Marquis; I humbly admit it. I have never died."

"Yet you are not invulnerable, like Achilles; and even Achilles was not invulnerable, for Paris killed him by wounding his heel with an arrow."

"No, I am not invulnerable, and that is my great regret," said Cagliostro.

"Then, Monsieur, you may be killed; you may die a violent death?"

"Alas! yes."

"How, then, have you escaped all accidents for three thousand five hundred years?"

"It is chance, Monsieur le Comte; but will you follow my reasoning?"

"Yes, yes!" cried all, with eagerness; and with these expressions of unusual interest, every one leaned on the table and prepared to listen.

Cagliostro continued: "What is the first requisite to life?" he asked, spreading out his white and beautiful hands, covered with rings, among which Cleopatra's shone conspicuously. "Is it not health?"

"Certainly."

"And the way to preserve health is —"

"Proper diet," said the Comte de Haga.

"You are right, Monsieur le Comte. It is proper diet that produces good health. Well, then, why should not these drops of my elixir constitute the best possible diet?"

"Who knows that?"

"You, Count."

"Yes, without doubt; but —"

"But no others," said Madame Dubarry.

"That, Madame, is a question which we will not discuss now. Well, then, I have always followed the regimen of my drops; and since they fulfil the dream of men of all times, since they are that which the ancients searched for under the name of the 'Water of Youth,' and which the moderns have sought to discover under the name of the 'Elixir of Life,' I have constantly preserved my youth, and consequently my health, and consequently my life. That is clear enough."

"But all things get worn out, Count, — the most excellent body as well as everything else."

"That of Paris, like that of Vulcan," said the countess. "You knew Paris, doubtless, Monsieur de Cagliostro?"

"Perfectly, Madame; he was a fine young man, but really did not deserve all that Homer said of him, and that women think of him. In the first place, he had red hair."

"Red hair? Horrible!"

"Unluckily, Madame, Helen was not of your opinion. But let us return to our elixir."

"Yes, yes!" all exclaimed.

"You say, Monsieur de Taverney, that all things get worn out; but you also know that everything recovers again, is regenerated, or replaced, whichever you please to call it. The famous knife of Saint Hubert, which so often changed both blade and handle, is an example; for through every change it still remained the knife of Saint Hubert. The wine which the monks of Heidelberg preserve so carefully in their cellars still remains the same wine, although each year they pour into it a fresh supply. Therefore, this wine always remains clear, bright, and delicious;

while the wine which Opimus and I hid in the earthen jars was, when I tried it a hundred years after, only a thick mud, which might, indeed, have been eaten, but certainly could not have been drunk. Well, I follow the example of the monks of Heidelberg, and preserve my body by introducing into it every year new elements, which regenerate the old. Every morning a new and fresh atom replaces in my blood, my flesh, and my bones, a worn-out, inert molecule. I stay that ruin which most men allow insensibly to invade their whole being, and I force into action all those powers which God has given to the human constitution as a defence against destruction, — powers which commonly are misdirected, or abandoned to the paralysis of inactivity; those powers I have compelled to continuous labor, which has facilitated, has caused even, the introduction of a stimulant always new. In consequence of that assiduous study of life, my thought, my movements, my nerves, my heart, my soul, have never failed in their operation; and as all things are bound together in this world, — as those succeed best in anything who are always doing that thing, — I have naturally become more skilful than any one else by avoiding the dangers of an existence of three thousand years; and that because I have succeeded in acquiring from everything such an experience that I foresee misfortunes, — I feel the dangers of any situation, be it what it may. Thus, you would not get me to enter a house which is in danger of falling. Oh, no! I have seen too many houses not to tell at a glance the safe from the unsafe. You would not see me go out hunting with a man who managed his gun badly. From Cephalus, who killed his wife Procris, down to the regent who shot the prince in the eye, I have seen too many unskilful people. You could not make me accept, in battle, the post which many a man would take

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without thinking, because I should have calculated in a moment all the chances of danger at that point. You will tell me that one cannot foresee a stray bullet; but the man who has escaped a million gunshots is inexcusable if he allows himself to be killed by a stray bullet. Ah, you look incredulous! but am I not a living proof? I do not tell you that I am immortal, only that I know better than others how to avoid danger. For instance, I would not remain here now alone with Monsieur de Launay, who is thinking that if he had me in the Bastille he would put my immortality to the test of starvation. Neither would I remain with Monsieur de Condorcet; for he is thinking that he might just empty into my glass the contents of that ring which he wears on his left hand, and which is full of poison, — not with any evil intent, but only as a scientific experiment, to see if I should die."

The two people named made a movement.

"Confess, Monsieur de Launay! We are not in a court of justice; besides, thoughts are not punished. Did you not think what I said? And you, Monsieur de Condorcet, would you not have liked to let me taste the poison in your ring, in the name of your beloved mistress, science?"

"Indeed," said Monsieur de Launay, laughing and blushing, "I confess you are right; it was folly, but that folly did pass through my mind at the very moment when you accused me."

"And I," said Monsieur de Condorcet, "will not be less candid; I did think that if you tasted the contents of my ring, I would not give a farthing for your immortality."

A cry of admiration burst from the rest of the party; these avowals confirming not the immortality, but the penetration of the Comte de Cagliostro.

"You see," said Cagliostro, quietly, "that I divined

these dangers; well, it is the same with other things. The experience of a long life reveals to me, at a glance, the past and the future of those whom I meet. My infallibility on this point is such that it extends even to animals and inanimate objects. If I get into a carriage, I can tell from the look of the horses that they are likely to run away; and from that of the coachman that he will overturn me. If I go on board ship, I can see that the captain is ignorant or obstinate, and consequently cannot, or will not, navigate his vessel skilfully. Thereupon I avoid the coachman and the captain, and leave those horses or that ship. I do not deny chance, I only lessen it, and instead of incurring a hundred chances, like the rest of the world, I prevent ninety-nine of them, and endeavor to guard against the hundredth. This is the advantage of having lived three thousand years."

"Then," said Lapeyrouse, laughing, amid the wonder and enthusiasm created by Cagliostro's words, "my dear prophet, you should come with me when I embark to make the tour of the world; you would render me a signal service."

Cagliostro did not reply.

"Monsieur de Richelieu," continued Lapeyrouse, "since the Comte de Cagliostro, — and I understand that, — does not wish to leave so good company, you must permit me to go without him. Excuse me, Comte de Haga, and you, Madame, but it is seven o'clock, and I have promised his Majesty to start at a quarter past. But since Comte de Cagliostro will not be tempted to come with me and see my ships, perhaps he can tell me what will happen to me between Versailles and Brest. From Brest to the Pole, I ask nothing, — that is my own business. But, *pardieu!* he ought to give me an opinion on what may happen on the way to Brest."

Cagliostro looked at Lapeyrouse with such a melancholy air, so full both of pity and kindness, that the others were struck by it. The navigator himself, however, did not remark it. He took leave of the company; his valet threw over his shoulders a large fur riding-coat, and Madame Dubarry slipped into his pocket some of those exquisite cordials which are so pleasing to the traveller, but which he rarely thinks of providing for himself, and which recall to him his absent friends during the long nights of a journey under wintry skies.

Lapeyrouse, still full of gayety, bowed respectfully to the Comte de Haga, and held out his hand to the old marshal.

"Adieu, dear Lapeyrouse," said the latter.

"No, Monsieur le Duc, au revoir," replied Lapeyrouse. "One would think I was departing for eternity; now I have but to circumnavigate the globe, — five or six years' absence only; it is scarcely worth while to say 'adieu' for that."

"Five or six years," said the marshal; "you might almost as well say five or six centuries; days are years at my age, — therefore I say adieu."

"Bah! ask the sorcerer," returned Lapeyrouse, still laughing, "he will promise you twenty years more life. Will you not, Monsieur de Cagliostro? Oh, Count, why did I not hear sooner of those precious drops of yours? Whatever the price, I should have shipped a tun of them on the 'Astrolabe.' Madame, another kiss of that beautiful hand; I shall certainly not see such another till I return; au revoir," and he left the room.

Cagliostro still preserved the same mournful silence. They heard the steps of the captain as he left the house, his gay voice in the court-yard, and his farewells to the persons assembled there to see him depart. Then the

horses shook their heads covered with bells, the door of the carriage shut with some noise, and the wheels were heard rolling along the street.

Lapeyrouse had started on that voyage from which he was destined never to return.

When the last sound had died away all eyes were directed, as if controlled by a superior power, toward Cagliostro. At that moment there was a pythonic illumination in his face which startled all the company. A strange silence lasted some moments. The Comte de Haga was the first to speak. "And why," said he, "did you not reply to him, Monsieur?"

Cagliostro started, as if the question had roused him from a revery. "Because," said he, "I must either have told a falsehood or a sad truth."

"How so?"

"I must have said to him, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse, the duke is right in saying to you 'adieu' and not 'au revoir.'"

"Eh! but," said Richelieu, turning pale, "what the devil, Monsieur Cagliostro, are you saying, then, about Lapeyrouse?"

"Oh, reassure yourself, Monsieur le Maréchal," replied Cagliostro, quickly, "it is not as regards you that the prediction is ominous."

"What!" cried Madame Dubarry, "is poor Lapeyrouse, who has just kissed my hand —"

"Not only, Madame, will never kiss it again, but he will never again see those he has just left," said Cagliostro, looking attentively at his glass full of water, which, from the position in which it was placed, exhibited a luminous surface of an opal tint, crossed by the shadows of surrounding objects.

A cry of astonishment burst from all. The interest of

the conversation deepened every moment, and it might have been thought, from the solemn and anxious air with which all regarded Cagliostro, that they were awaiting the infallible predictions of an ancient oracle.

In the midst of this preoccupation, Monsieur de Favras, representing the general feeling, rose, made a sign, and went on tiptoe to listen in the antechamber, and ascertain whether any of the servants were within hearing. But, as we have said, the house of Monsieur le Maréchal de Richelieu was well regulated, and Monsieur de Favras found in the antechamber only an old intendant, who, implacable as a sentinel at an exposed post, defended the approaches to the dining-room at the solemn hour of dessert. He therefore returned to his seat, making a sign to the guests that they were alone.

"In that case," said Madame Dubarry, replying to the assurance of Monsieur de Favras as if it had been uttered aloud, "tell us what is to happen to that poor Lapeyrouse."

Cagliostro still maintained the same ominous silence.

"Oh, yes; let us hear," cried all the rest.

"Well, then, Monsieur de Lapeyrouse intends, as you know, to make the tour of the globe, and continue the researches of poor Captain Cook, who was killed in the Sandwich Islands."

"Yes, yes, we know," said all the company, by signs, rather than in words.

"Everything should foretell a happy termination to this voyage; Monsieur de Lapeyrouse is a good seaman, and his route has been most skilfully traced by the king."

"Yes," interrupted Comte de Haga, "the king of France is a clever geographer; is he not, Monsieur de Condorcet?"

"More skilful than is needful for a king," replied the marquis. "Kings ought to know things only slightly; then they will let themselves be guided by those who know them thoroughly."

"Is this a lesson, Marquis?" said the Comte de Haga, smiling.

Condorcet blushed. "Oh, no, Monsieur le Comte," said he; "only a simple reflection, a general truth."

"Well, he has set out?" said Madame Dubarry, anxious to bring the conversation back to Lapeyrouse.

"Yes, he has set out," replied Cagliostro; "but don't believe, in spite of his haste, that he will soon embark. I foresee much time lost at Brest."

"That would be a pity," said Condorcet; "this is the proper time for sailing; it is even now rather late, — February or March would have been better."

"Oh, do not grudge him these two or three months, Monsieur de Condorcet; he lives, at least, during that time, — he lives and hopes."

"He has good officers, I suppose," said Richelieu.

"Yes, he who commands the second ship is a distinguished officer. I see him — young, adventurous, and too brave, unhappily."

"Why unhappily?"

"A year later I look for him, and see him no more," said Cagliostro, anxiously consulting his glass. "No one here is related to Monsieur de Langle?"

"No."

"No one knows him?"

"No."

"Well, death will begin with him; I see him no longer."

A murmur of affright escaped from all the guests.

"But he, Lapeyrouse?" cried several voices, eagerly.

"He sails, he lands, he re-embarks; I see one, two

years of successful navigation. We hear news of him,[1] and then —"

"Then?"

"Years pass —"

"But at last?"

"The sea is vast, the heavens are clouded. Here and there appear unknown lands, and figures hideous as the monsters of the Grecian Archipelago. They watch the ship, which in a fog is drifting among the rocks, at the mercy of the currents. At last the tempest, the tempest more hospitable than the land, and then — ominous flames. Oh, Lapeyrouse! Lapeyrouse! if you could hear me, I would cry to you. You set out, like Columbus, to discover a world; Lapeyrouse, beware of unknown isles." He ceased, and an icy shiver ran through the assembly.

"But why did you not warn him?" asked the Comte de Haga, submitting like the others to the influence of this extraordinary man, who moved all hearts at his will.

"Yes," cried Madame Dubarry, "why not send after him and bring him back? The life of a man like Lapeyrouse is surely worth the journey of a courier, my dear Marshal."

The marshal understood, and rose to ring the bell. Cagliostro extended his arm to stop him. The marshal returned to his chair.

"Alas!" said Cagliostro, "all advice would be useless. The man who can foresee destiny cannot change it. Monsieur de Lapeyrouse would laugh if he heard my words, as the son of Priam laughed when Cassandra prophesied; and see, you begin to laugh yourself, Monsieur le Comte de Haga, and laughing is contagious, — your companions are

[1] The officer who brought the last news received from Lapeyrouse was Monsieur de Lesseps, — the only man on the expedition who returned to France.

catching it. Oh, do not restrain yourself, Monsieur de Favras; I have never yet found a hearer who believed."

"Oh, we believe," said Madame Dubarry and the old Duc de Richelieu.

"I believe," murmured Taverney.

"I, also," said the Comte de Haga, politely.

"Yes," replied Cagliostro, "you believe, because it concerns Lapeyrouse; but if I spoke of you, you would not believe."

"Oh!"

"I am sure of it."

"I confess that what would have made me believe," returned the Comte de Haga, "would have been that you should say to him, 'Beware of unknown isles;' then he would, at least, have had the chance of avoiding them."

"I assure you, no, Monsieur le Comte; and if he had believed me, consider the horrible effect of that revelation. Then in presence of danger, at sight of those unknown isles which were to be fatal to him, the unhappy man, believing in my prediction, would have felt the mysterious approach of death without being able to flee from it. And so he would have suffered not one death but a thousand; for it is suffering a thousand deaths to wander in gloom with despair at one's side. That hope which I should take from him — think of it! — is the last consolation to which the wretched victim still clings under the executioner's knife, when even the knife has touched him, when he feels its sharp edge, when his blood begins to flow. Life is extinguished while still the man is hoping."

"That is true!" said several of the guests, in a suppressed whisper.

"Yes," said Condorcet; "the veil which hides from us our future is the only real good which God has vouchsafed to man."

"Nevertheless," said the Comte de Haga, "did a man like you tell me to shun a certain man, or a certain thing, I would beware, and I would thank you for the counsel."

Cagliostro gently shook his head, with a serious smile.

"I mean it, Monsieur de Cagliostro," continued the Comte de Haga, "warn me, and I will thank you."

"You wish me to tell you what I would not tell Lapeyrouse?"

"Yes; I wish it."

Cagliostro made a movement as if to begin, and then stopped, and said, "Oh no, Monsieur le Comte, no!"

"I beg you."

Monsieur de Cagliostro turned away his head, "Never!" he murmured.

"Take care," said the count, smiling; "you are making me incredulous."

"Incredulity is better than misery."

"Monsieur de Cagliostro," said the count, gravely, "you forget one thing."

"And what is that?" asked the prophet, respectfully.

"It is that though there are men who had better remain ignorant of their destiny, there are others who should know it, as it concerns not themselves alone, but millions of others."

"I must have an order, then. Without an order I will do nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"That if your Majesty commands," said Cagliostro, in a low voice, "I will obey."

"I command you to reveal to me my destiny, Monsieur de Cagliostro," said the king, with an air at once courteous and dignified.

At this moment, as the Comte de Haga had dropped his

incognito in giving that order, Monsieur de Richelieu advanced toward him, and humbly saluting the prince, said, "Thanks, Sire, for the honor which the king of Sweden has done my house; will your Majesty assume the place of honor? From this moment it belongs to you alone."

"Let us remain as we are, Marshal; I wish to hear what Monsieur de Cagliostro is about to say."

"One does not speak the truth to kings, Sire."

"Bah! I am not in my kingdom; take your place again, Monsieur le Duc. Proceed, Monsieur de Cagliostro, I beg."

Cagliostro looked again in his glass. Globules like those seen in champagne rose from the bottom to the surface. The water seemed to be attracted by his powerful gaze, and to become agitated at his will. "Sire," said he, "tell me what you wish to know; I am ready to answer."

"Tell me by what death I shall die."

"By a gunshot, Sire."

The eyes of Gustavus grew bright. "Ah, in a battle," said he; "the death of a soldier! Thanks, Monsieur de Cagliostro, a hundred times I thank you. Oh, I foresee battles! and Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII. have shown me how a king of Sweden should die."

Cagliostro drooped his head, without replying.

The Comte de Haga frowned. "Oh, oh!" said he, "is it not in battle that the gunshot will be discharged?"

"No, Sire."

"In a sedition? Yes, that is possible."

"No, not in a sedition, Sire."

"But where, then?"

"At a ball, Sire."

The king remained silent, and Cagliostro buried his head in his hands.

Every one looked pale and frightened; and all watched

the author of the prophecy and him whom it chiefly concerned. Then Monsieur de Condorcet took the glass of water, in which the fatal augury had been read, and raising it to his eye, examined carefully the glittering facets of the glass and its mysterious contents. His look seemed to be inquiring of both the solid and liquid crystal the solution of the problem, which his reason reduced to the import of a purely physical speculation.

In fact, the scientist was trying to compute the water's depth, luminous refractions, and microscopic play. He was asking himself the cause and explanation of this jugglery, practised upon men so enlightened as those who surrounded the table, by a man to whom he could not deny the possession of extraordinary power. Doubtless he found no solution of his problem, for he ceased his examination of the glass, returned it to the table, and amid the stupefaction caused by the prediction of Cagliostro, "Well, I also," he said, "will beg our illustrious prophet to consult for me his magic mirror. Unfortunately, I am not a powerful lord; I cannot command, and my obscure life concerns no millions of people."

"Monsieur," said the Comte de Haga, "you command in the name of science, and your life belongs not only to a nation, but to all mankind."

"I thank you, Monsieur le Comte!" said Condorcet; "but perhaps your opinion on this subject is not shared by Monsieur de Cagliostro."

Cagliostro quickly raised his head. "Yes, Marquis," said he, with a beginning of nervous irritability, which in ancient times would have been attributed to the presence of the god that inspired him, "you are indeed a powerful lord in the kingdom of intelligence; look me, then, in the face, and tell me seriously if you also wish that I should prophesy to you."

"Seriously, Monsieur le Comte, — upon my honor."

"Well, Marquis," said Cagliostro, in a hollow voice, and closing his eyelids, "you will die of that poison which you carry in your ring; you will die — "

"Oh! but if I throw it away?"

"Throw it away."

"You allow that it is very easy?"

"Then throw it away, I tell you."

"Oh, yes, Marquis!" cried Madame Dubarry; "throw away that horrid poison, — throw it away, if it be only to falsify this prophet of evil who threatens us all with his prophecies. For if you throw it away you cannot die by it, as Monsieur de Cagliostro predicts; so there, at least, he will have been wrong."

"Madame la Comtesse is right," said the Comte de Haga.

"Bravo, Countess!" said Richelieu. "Come, Marquis, throw away that poison, for now that I know you carry it, I shall tremble every time we drink together; the ring might open of itself, and — "

"And two glasses touched together come very close," said Taverney. "Throw it away, Marquis, — throw it away!"

"It is useless," said Cagliostro, quietly; "Monsieur de Condorcet will not throw it away."

"No," returned Condorcet, "I will not throw it away, — not that I wish to aid my destiny, but because this is a unique poison, prepared by Cabanis, which chance has completely hardened, and that chance might never occur again; therefore I will not throw it away. Triumph if you will, Monsieur de Cagliostro!"

"Destiny," replied Cagliostro, "ever finds faithful agents to aid in the execution of her decrees."

"Then I shall die by poison!" said the marquis.

"Well, so be it. It is an admirable death, I think, — a little poison on the tip of the tongue, and I am gone. That is not death; it is only minus life, as we say in algebra."

"It is no wish of mine that you should suffer, Monsieur," said Cagliostro, coldly; and he made a sign indicating that he desired to say no more regarding Monsieur de Condorcet.

"Then, Monsieur," said Monsieur de Favras, "we have a shipwreck, a gunshot, and a poisoning; they make my mouth water. Will you not do me the favor to predict to me, also, some little catastrophe of the same kind?"

"Oh, Marquis!" replied Cagliostro, beginning to grow warm under this irony, "it would be wrong in you to envy these gentlemen, for I assure you that you will have still better."

"Better!" said Monsieur de Favras, laughing; "that is pledging yourself to a great deal. Better than the sea, fire, poison, — that is difficult."

"There remains the rope, Monsieur le Marquis," said Cagliostro, bowing.

"The rope! Oh, oh! what are you telling me?"

"I am telling you that you will be hanged!" replied Cagliostro, with a sort of prophetic rage, which he could no longer control.

"Hanged! The devil!" cried the guests.

"Monsieur forgets that I am a nobleman," said Monsieur de Favras, coldly; "or if he means to speak of a suicide, I warn him that I shall respect myself sufficiently, even in my last moments, not to use a rope while I have a sword."

"I do not speak of a suicide, Monsieur."

"Then you speak of a punishment?"

"Yes."

"You are a foreigner, Monsieur, and therefore I pardon you."

"For what?"

"Your ignorance, Monsieur. In France we decapitate noblemen."

"You will arrange that matter with the executioner," replied Cagliostro, crushing his interlocutor with that rough answer.

There was a moment's hesitation among those present.

"Do you know that I begin to tremble?" said Monsieur de Launay; "my predecessors have had so bad luck that I am afraid I shall find only evil if I plunge my hand into the same bag."

"Then you are more reasonable than they, and do not seek to know the future. You are right. Be it good or bad, let us respect the secret of God."

"Oh, Monsieur de Launay!" said Madame Dubarry, "I hope you will not be less courageous than the others have been."

"I hope so too, Madame," said the governor, bowing. Then turning to Cagliostro, "Monsieur," he said, "favor me in my turn with my horoscope, if you please."

"It is easy," replied Cagliostro; "a blow on the head with a hatchet, and all will be over."

A cry of terror sounded through the hall. Richelieu and Taverney begged Cagliostro to say no more, but feminine curiosity prevailed.

"To hear you talk, Count," said Madame Dubarry, "one would think the whole universe must die by violence. Here we are, eight of us, and five are already condemned by you."

"Oh, you understand that it is all a prearranged affair, and that we laugh at it, Madame," said Monsieur de Favras, trying to laugh in fact.

"Certainly we will laugh at it," said the Comte de Haga, "be it true or false."

"Oh, I will laugh too, then," said Madame Dubarry; "I will not dishonor the assembly by my cowardice; but alas! I am only a woman, and shall not have the honor to be ranked with you by a tragical death; a woman dies in her bed. Alas, my death, that of a sorrowful old woman abandoned by every one, will be the worst of all. Will it not, Monsieur de Cagliostro?"

She stopped and seemed to wait for the prophet to reassure her. Cagliostro did not speak; so, her curiosity obtaining the mastery over her fears, she went on, "Well, Monsieur de Cagliostro, will you not answer me?"

"How can I answer you, Madame, when you ask me no questions?"

"But —" said she.

"Decide," said Cagliostro; "do you question me, — yes, or no?"

The countess made an effort, and drawing courage from the smiles of the company, "Yes," she cried, "I will run the risk. Tell me the fate of Jeanne de Vaubernier, Comtesse Dubarry."

"On the scaffold, Madame," replied the prophet of evil.

"A jest, Monsieur, is it not?" stammered she, looking at him with a supplicating air.

Cagliostro did not observe that look. "Why do you think I jest?" said he.

"Oh, because to die on the scaffold one must have committed some crime, — stolen, or committed murder, or done something dreadful; and it is not likely I shall do that. It was a jest, was it not?"

"Oh, my God! yes," said Cagliostro; "all I have said is but a jest."

The countess laughed, but a skilled observer would

have thought her laugh too noisy to be quite natural. "Come, Monsieur de Favras," said she, "let us order our funeral coaches."

"Oh, that will be needless for you, Madame," said Cagliostro.

"Why so, Monsieur?"

"Because you will go to the scaffold in a cart."

"Oh, how horrible! oh, the dreadful man! Marshal, for Heaven's sake choose more cheerful guests next time, or I will never visit you again."

"Excuse me, Madame," said Cagliostro; "but you, like all the rest, would have me speak."

"I, like all the rest. At least, you will grant me time to choose my confessor?"

"It will be superfluous, Countess."

"Why?"

"The last one to mount the scaffold with a confessor will be—"

"Will be?" asked all the company.

"Will be the king of France;" and Cagliostro said these words in a voice so hollow and melancholy that it was to the company like a blast of death, and it chilled them to the bottom of their hearts.

Then ensued a silence which lasted several minutes. Meantime, Cagliostro raised to his lips the glass of water in which he had read these fearful prophecies; but scarcely had it touched his mouth when he set it down, and pushed it from him with a movement of disgust. He turned his eyes to Monsieur de Taverney.

"Oh," cried the latter in terror, "do not tell me anything, I do not wish to know."

"Well, then, I will ask in his place," said Richelieu.

"You, Marshal, be happy; you are the only one of us all who will die in his bed."

"Coffee, gentleman, coffee!" cried the marshal, enchanted with the prediction.

Every one rose.

But before passing into the salon, the Comte de Haga, approaching Cagliostro, said: "Monsieur, I have no idea of trying to escape my destiny; but tell me what I ought to distrust."

"A muff, Sire," replied Cagliostro.

Monsieur de Haga withdrew.

"And I?" said Condorcet.

"An omelette."

"Good, I renounce eggs;" and he followed the count.

"And I?" said Monsieur de Favras, — "what must I fear?"

"A letter."

"Very good; I thank you."

"And I?" asked De Launay.

"The taking of the Bastille."

"Oh, you quite reassure me;" and he went away, laughing.

"Now for me, Monsieur," said the countess, with anxiety.

"You, beautiful Countess, beware of the Place Louis XV."

"Alas!" said the countess, "one day already, I lost myself there; that day I suffered much; I nearly lost my head."

"Well, Countess, this time it will be lost never to be regained."

Madame Dubarry uttered a cry, and fled to the salon to join the other guests. Cagliostro was about to follow her, when Richelieu stopped him. "One moment," said he. "There remain only Taverney and I, to whom you have predicted nothing, my dear sorcerer."

"Monsieur de Taverney begged me to say nothing, and you, Monsieur le Maréchal, have asked me nothing."

"Oh, I still entreat you to tell me nothing," said Taverney, clasping his hands.

"But come, to prove your power, tell us something that only Taverney and I know," said Richelieu.

"What?" asked Cagliostro, smiling.

"Tell us what makes Taverney come to Versailles, instead of living quietly in his beautiful house at Maison-Rouge, which the king repurchased for him three years ago."

"Nothing more simple, Marshal," said Cagliostro. "Ten years ago, Monsieur de Taverney wished to give his daughter, Mademoiselle Andrée, to the King Louis XV.; but he did not succeed."

"Oh! oh!" groaned Taverney.

"Now Monsieur wishes to give his son, Philippe de Taverney, to the Queen Marie Antoinette; ask him if I speak the truth."

"On my word," said Taverney, trembling, "this man is a sorcerer; devil take me if he is not."

"Oh, oh! do not speak so cavalierly of the Devil, my old comrade," said the marshal.

"Frightful! frightful!" murmured Taverney; and he turned to implore Cagliostro to be discreet, but he had disappeared.

"Come, Taverney, to the salon," said the marshal; "or they will drink their coffee without us." But when they arrived there the room was empty; not one of the guests had courage to face again the author of these terrible predictions.

The wax lights burned in the candelabra, the coffee was smoking in the urn, the fire burned on the hearth, — but all for nothing.

"Faith, old friend, it seems we must take our coffee *tête-à-tête*. Why, what the devil has become of you?" Richelieu looked all round him, but Taverney had vanished like the rest. "Never mind," said the marshal, chuckling as Voltaire might have done, and rubbing his withered though still white hands; "I shall be the only one to die in my bed. Eh, eh! in my bed. Well, Comte de Cagliostro, at least I believe. In my bed, that was it; I shall die in my bed, and I trust not for a long time. Hola! my valet and my drops."

The valet entered with the bottle, and the marshal went with him into the bed-room.

CHAPTER I.

TWO UNKNOWN LADIES.

THE winter of 1784, that monster which devoured a sixth part of France, we could not see, although he growled at the doors, while at the house of Monsieur de Richelieu, shut in, as we were, in that warm and comfortable dining-room.

A little frost on the windows seems but the luxury of Nature, added to that of man. Winter has its diamonds, its powder, and its silver embroidery for the rich man wrapped in his furs, or packed in his carriage, or snug among the wadding and velvet of a well-warmed room. Hoar-frost is a beauty, ice a change of decoration by the greatest of artists, which the rich admire through their windows. He who is warm can admire the withered trees, and find a charm in the sombre perspective of the snow-covered plain. He who finds mounting to his brain the savory odors of the dinner awaiting him, can inhale from time to time, through the partly opened window, the sharp, perfume of the north wind and the icy vapor of the snows which are refreshing to his mind. He, in short, who after a day without suffering, when millions of his fellow-creatures are enduring dreadful privations, throws himself on his bed of down, between his fine and well-aired sheets, may find out that all is for the best, in this best of all possible worlds.

But he who is cold sees nothing of all these splendors of Nature, — as richly clad in her white as in her green mantle. He who is hungry looks toward the earth, and avoids

looking at the sky, — the sky without a sun, and therefore without a smile for the unhappy.

Now, at the time of which we write, — that is, about the middle of the month of April, — three hundred thousand miserable beings, dying from cold and hunger, groaned in Paris alone: in Paris, where, in spite of the boast that scarcely another city contained so many rich people, nothing had been prepared to prevent the poor from perishing of cold and want.

For the last four months a sky of brass had driven the poor from the villages into the town, as in winter wolves are driven from the woods into the villages.

No more bread; no more wood. No more bread for those who felt this cold; no more wood to cook bread. All the provisions which had been collected, Paris had devoured in a month. The provost, shortsighted and incapable, did not know how to procure for Paris, which was under his care, two hundred thousand cords of wood which might be obtained within a radius of ten leagues. He gave as an excuse, when it was cold, that the ice hindered the horses; if it thawed, he pleaded the insufficient number of horses and conveyances. Louis XVI., ever good and humane, always ready to attend to the physical wants of his people, although he overlooked their social wants, began by contributing a sum of two hundred thousand francs for the hiring of horses and carts, and insisting on their immediate use.

Still the demand continued greater than the supply. It was necessary to restrict the purchaser. At first, no one was allowed to carry away from the public timber-yard more than a cart-load of wood; then they were limited to half this quantity. Soon long lines of applicants might be seen waiting outside the doors, as they were afterwards seen at the bakers' shops. The king gave away the whole

of his private income in charity. He raised three million francs on the impost receipts, and applied them to the relief of the sufferers, declaring that every other need must give way before that of cold and famine. The queen, on her part, gave five hundred louis from her purse. The convents, the hospitals, and the public buildings were thrown open as places of asylum for the poor; every gate to the larger houses was thrown open by order of their owners, who followed the example given at the royal residences, to admit into their court-yards the suffering poor, who came to crouch around the large fires burning there.

Thus they hoped to reach the period of the desired thaw. But the sky was unrelenting. Every evening a copper-colored veil extended up from the horizon; the stars shone bright and cold, like funeral torches, and the frosts of the night congealed anew into a lake of diamonds the pale snow which the noon-day sun had for a moment melted.

During the day thousands of workmen, with spades and shovels, cleared away the snow from before the houses; so that on each side of the streets, already too narrow for the traffic, rose a high, thick wall, blocking up the way. Heavy carriages with wheels slipping, horses stumbling and falling, crowded the foot-passengers against these icy walls, and exposed them to the threefold risk of falling, of being run over, and of being covered by the snow. Soon these masses of snow and ice became so large that the shops were obscured by them; the passage-ways were obstructed, and it was found necessary to suspend the removal of it, — the means at command were insufficient.

Paris could do no more. She yielded, and allowed the winter to do its worst. December, January, February, and March passed thus, although now and then a few

days' thaw changed all Paris, whose sewers were blocked up, into an ocean. Horses were drowned, and carriages destroyed in the streets, some of which could be traversed only in boats. Paris, faithful to its character, sang through this destruction by the thaw, as it had done through that by famine. Processions were made to the markets to see the fisherwomen serving their customers with immense leather boots on, inside which their trousers were pushed, and with their petticoats tucked round their waists, all laughing, gesticulating, and splashing each other as they stood in the water. These thaws, however, were but transitory; the frost returned, harder and more obstinate than ever, and recourse was had to sledges, pushed along by skaters, or drawn by rough-shod horses along the causeways, which were like polished mirrors. The Seine, frozen many feet deep, had become the rendezvous for all idlers, who assembled there to skate or slide, until, warmed by exercise, they ran to the nearest fire, lest the perspiration should freeze upon them. The time seemed to be approaching when, the water communications being stopped, and the roads impassable, provisions could no longer be sent in, and Paris, that gigantic body, would perish for want of food, — like those cetaceous monsters of the polar regions which, having devoured everything within their reach, remain enclosed in the polar ice, and die of starvation; since they are not able, like the smaller fish on which they prey, to escape by the fissures, and seek more temperate zones and waters more productive.

The king, in this extremity, assembled his council. It was decided to effect a removal of a portion of the population, — that is to say, to request the bishops, the abbés, and the monks, too careless of their residential duties, to return to their homes; also the governors, the intendants of provinces, who had made Paris their seat of govern-

ment, and the magistrates who preferred the opera and Parisian society to their official chairs. Indeed, all these persons used large quantities of wood in their hôtels, and consumed no small amount of food. There were still the noblemen from places in the provinces, who were also to be requested to leave. But Monsieur Lenoir, lieutenant of police, observed to the king that as none of these were criminals, and as they could not therefore be compelled to leave Paris in a day, they would probably delay their departure, partly by reason of their unwillingness to go at all, and partly on account of the state of the roads; so that the thaw would arrive before any advantage could be gained from that measure, while all the inconveniences of it would have been produced.

Meantime that pity on the part of the king, who had emptied his private coffers, and that compassion of the queen, who had exhausted her personal resources, had awakened the ingenious gratitude of the people, who commemorated by monuments as ephemeral as the calamity, and as the benefits conferred, the charities which Louis XVI. and the queen had bestowed upon the poor. As in other times soldiers raised trophies to the victorious general, constructed of the arms of the conquered enemy, so the Parisians, upon the field of battle where they had fought against the winter, raised obelisks of snow and ice in honor of the king and queen. Every one helped. The workman gave the strength of his arm, the artisan his industry, the artist his talent, and at the crossings of the principal streets the obelisks arose, elegant, bold, and solid. The poor man of letters whom the king's benevolence had sought out in his attic chamber, brought the offering of an inscription which expressed the feelings of his heart even more than it did the power of his mind.

At the end of March came a thaw, but it was partial

only, and unsettled. Returns of cold weather prolonged the misery, the hunger, and suffering of the Parisian population, while preserving, upright and solid, the obelisks of snow. Never had the misery of the people been so profound as in this latter period. The intermittent warmth of the sun made the cold and windy nights even more unendurable. Great masses of ice were melted, and flowing into the Seine caused it to overflow its banks. But in the early days of April, one of those returns of cold weather of which we have spoken, declared itself. The obelisks, down whose sides coursed already the gathering moisture, presage of destruction, — the obelisks, half-melted, were solidified anew, deformed, and reduced in size. A fine mantle of snow covered the boulevards and the quays, and sledges reappeared there, with their prancing horses. They went well upon the quays and the boulevards; but in the streets the coaches and the rapid cabriolets were the terror of pedestrians, who, not hearing their approach and hindered by the walls of ice, were unable to get out of their way, and frequently fell under the wheels while trying to escape.

In a few days there were in Paris many persons wounded or dying. There were legs broken by a fall on the ice, ribs broken by the shafts of cabriolets which, in the rapidity of their course, could not be stopped upon the icy surface. Then the police gave attention to the task of preserving from the carriage-wheels those who had been spared by cold, hunger, and inundation. The rich who injured the poor were compelled to pay damages. In those days, during the reign of aristocracies, there was even an aristocratic way of driving horses. A prince of the blood rode at full speed and with no cry of warning; a duke, a gentleman, or an opera-girl drove at a fast trot; a president or a financier at a trot; the dandy drove him-

self in his cabriolet, and his footman, standing behind, cried, "Take care!" when his master had run against or run over some unfortunate pedestrian; and then, as Mercier says, he got up again who was able to do so.

But while the Parisian could see beautiful swan-necked sledges coursing on the boulevards; while he could admire the lovely ladies of the court, flying like meteors over the ice, in their sable and ermine cloaks; while the gilded bells, the purple netting, and the horses' plumes amused the children, standing in rows to gaze at all these fine sights, — the Paris citizen forgot the carelessness of the police and the brutality of the coachmen, and the poor forgot their misery, for the moment at least, accustomed as they were to be patronized by the rich or by those who pretended to be rich.

It was under the circumstances we have just described, a week after the dinner given at Versailles by Monsieur de Richelieu, that one might have seen, on a bright, cold day, four elegant sledges gliding over the hardened snow which covered the ground. Outside of Paris the snow can long keep its virginal whiteness, there are so few to soil it with their footsteps; but in Paris a hundred thousand steps an hour soon darken and spoil the splendid mantle of winter.

The sledges, which glided easily over the road till they came to the city, stopped first at the boulevard, — that is to say, where mud began to take the place of snow. In fact, the noon-day sun had softened the atmosphere, and a temporary thaw had set in, — we say "temporary" because the clearness of the atmosphere gave promise that with the night would come that cold north wind which ruthlessly destroys in April the early leaves and the budding flowers.

In the foremost sledge were two men in brown riding

coats with double capes; the only difference in the coats was that on one the buttons and embroidery were of gold, and on the other they were of silk. They were drawn by a black horse with smoking nostrils, and turned from time to time as if to watch the sledge that followed them, and which contained two ladies so enveloped in furs that it was impossible to see their faces. It might even have been difficult to distinguish their sex, if the height of their head-dresses, on which were little hats with nodding plumes, had not proclaimed them to be women. From these colossal edifices, covered with ribbons and jewels, escaped, occasionally, a cloud of white powder, as in winter the wind shakes the snow from the branches of the trees.

These two ladies, seated side by side, were conversing so earnestly as scarcely to see the numerous spectators who watched their progress along the boulevards. One of them, taller and more majestic than the other, and holding to her mouth a finely embroidered cambric handkerchief, carried her head erect and stately, in spite of the wind made by the rapid motion of the sledge.

It had just struck five by the clock of the Church Saint Croix d'Antin, and night was beginning to descend upon Paris, and with the night the cold. They had just reached the Porte Saint Denis, when the lady who held a handkerchief to her mouth made a sign to the men in front, who thereupon quickened the pace of their horse, and soon disappeared among the evening mists, which were fast thickening around the colossal structure of the Bastille.

This signal she then repeated to the other two sledges, which also vanished along the Rue Saint Denis. Meanwhile the one in which she sat, having arrived at the Boulevard de Menilmontant, stopped.

In this place few people were to be seen; night had dispersed them. Besides, in this out-of-the-way quarter not many citizens would trust themselves without torches and an escort, since winter had sharpened the teeth of three or four thousand beggars who might easily become thieves.

The lady whom we have already designated to our readers as giving the orders, touched with her finger the shoulder of the coachman who was driving her, and said, "Weber, how long will it take the cabriolet to reach — you know where?"

"Matame will go in de gabriolet?" asked the coachman, with a strong German accent.

"Yes, I shall return by the streets, to see the fires. Now the streets are still more muddy than the boulevards, and we should not get on in the sledge. Besides, I begin to feel the cold; do not you, little one?" said the lady, addressing her companion.

"Yes, Madame," replied the latter.

"You understand, Weber, where to take the cabriolet?"

"Ferry vell, Matame."

"How much time will you need?"

"Alf ein hour."

"Good. What is the time, little one?"

The young lady looked at her watch, which however she could hardly see as it was growing dark, and said, "A quarter to six, Madame."

"Then at a quarter to seven, Weber." And saying these words the lady leaped lightly from the sledge, gave her hand to her friend, and walked away quickly, while the coachman, with gestures of respectful despair, murmured, loud enough for his mistress to hear, —

"Oh, mein Gott, vot imprutence!"

The two ladies laughed, drew closely around them their cloaks, the collars of which reached even to the tops of

their ears, and crossed the foot-path on the boulevard, amusing themselves by crunching the snow under their little feet shod with well furred shoes.

"You have good eyes, Andrée," said the lady who seemed the elder of the two, although she could not have been more than thirty or thirty-two years of age; "try to read the name at the corner of that street."

"Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, Madame," said the young lady, smiling.

"Rue du Pont-aux-Choux! Ah, *mon Dieu!* we must have lost our way. They told me the second street on the right — but what a smell of hot bread, Andrée!"

"That is not astonishing," said her companion, "for here is a baker's shop."

"Well, let us ask here for the Rue Saint Claude," said the elder lady, moving toward the door.

"Oh, do not go in, Madame; allow me," said Andrée.

"The Rue Saint Claude, my pretty ladies?" said a cheerful voice. "Are you asking for the Rue Saint Claude?"

The two ladies turned round at the same moment, and looking in the direction of the voice they saw, leaning against the door of the shop, a man with a jacket over his shoulders, but with legs and breast quite bare, notwithstanding the intense cold.

"Oh! a naked man!" cried the young lady, half hiding behind her companion; "are we, then, in Oceanica?"

"You are looking for the Rue Saint Claude?" repeated the baker's man, who did not understand the movement of the younger lady, and who, accustomed to his costume, was far from attributing to it the centrifugal force, the result of which we have just seen.

"Yes, my friend, the Rue Saint Claude," said the elder lady, hardly able to keep from laughing.

"Oh, it is not difficult to find; besides, I will conduct you there myself," replied the jolly, flour-sprinkled youth, who, suiting the action to the words, began to move his long bony legs, which terminated in two old shoes as large as boats.

"No, no!" cried the elder lady, who did not fancy such a guide; "do not disturb yourself. Tell us the way, and we shall easily find it."

"First street to the right, Madame," replied the guide, discreetly withdrawing.

"Thanks," said the ladies, simultaneously; and they set off, running in the direction indicated, stifling their laughter in their muffs.

CHAPTER II.

AN INTERIOR.

If we have not calculated too much on the memory of our reader, we may hope that he already knows the Rue Saint Claude, the eastern end of which joins the boulevard, and the western, the Rue Saint Louis; indeed, he has seen more than one of the personages who have played or will play a part in this history, passing through it in former times, — that is, when the great physician Joseph Balsamo lived there with his sibyl Lorenza and his master Althotas. In 1784 as in 1770, the time at which we first introduced our readers to the place, the Rue Saint Claude was a respectable street, rather dark, it is true, certainly not very clean; in short, not much frequented, not much built up, and little known. But it had its name of a saint and its rank as a street of the *Marais;* and as such it sheltered in the three or four houses of which it consisted, several gentlemen of small property, several poor trades-people, and several paupers omitted in the parish lists.

Besides these three or four houses, there was at the corner of the boulevard a hôtel of grand appearance of which the Rue Saint Claude might have been proud, as of an aristocratic building; but this house whose high windows would on festal days have illuminated the whole street merely by the reflection of its candelabra and chandeliers, — this house, we say, was the darkest, the most silent, and the most completely closed of all the houses in that quarter.

The gate was never opened; the windows, lined with leather cushions, had on each leaf of the window-blind, upon every moulding of the shutters, a coating of dust which physiologists or geologists would have said had been accumulating for ten years.

Sometimes an idle passer-by, some curious person, or a neighbor approached the gate, and through the huge key-hole examined the interior of the court-yard; all he could see, however, was masses of weeds growing between the stones, and green moss spreading itself over everything. Occasionally, an enormous rat, sovereign of this deserted domain, quietly crossed the yard and disappeared in the cellar, — superfluous modesty, when he had the choice of so many fine sitting-rooms where he need never fear the intrusion of a cat.

If it happened to be a passer-by or a curious person, after having established for himself the fact of the solitude of this hôtel, he would go on his way; but if it was a neighbor, since the interest which he took in the hôtel was much greater, he remained almost always long enough to be joined by a second neighbor, attracted by curiosity like his own; and then almost always a conversation took place of which we are very sure that we can recall the substance, if not the details.

"Neighbor," said the one who was not looking to the one who looked, "what do you see in the house of Monsieur le Comte de Balsamo?"

"Neighbor," replied the latter, "I see the rat."

"Ah, will you allow me?" and the second curious person placed himself in his turn at the key-hole.

"Do you see him?" said the dispossessed neighbor to the one in possession.

"Yes," replied the latter, "I see him. Ah, Monsieur! he has grown fat."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I am sure of it."

"I believe you! He has nothing to trouble him."

"And certainly, whatever they may say, there must be some good tid-bits in the house."

"Good tid-bits, you say?"

"Why, Monsieur de Balsamo disappeared too suddenly not to have forgotten something."

"Indeed, neighbor, you may be right."

And after having looked again at the rat, they separated, alarmed at having said so much on a matter so mysterious and delicate.

Indeed, after the burning of this house, or rather a part of it, Balsamo had disappeared, no repairs had been made, and the hôtel was unoccupied.

We will leave it, rising sombre and damp in the darkness, with its terraces covered with snow, and its roof destroyed by the flames, — this old hôtel which we did not wish to pass without stopping before it, as before an old acquaintance; then crossing the street from left to right, we shall see, adjoining a little garden enclosed by a high wall, a narrow and high house, rising like a tall white tower against the deep gray-blue of the sky. At the top of the house a chimney rises like a lightning-rod, and right over the top of this chimney a brilliant star shines and sparkles.

The upper story of the house would be lost unseen in space except for a ray of light which illuminates two of the three windows in the front. The other stories are dark and gloomy. Are the tenants already asleep? Are they economizing, beneath their blankets, both the candles which are so dear, and the wood which is so scarce this year? Whatever the cause, the four stories give no sign

of life; while the fifth not only lives, but even shines forth with some ostentation.

Let us knock at the door and ascend the dark staircase which terminates at this fifth story, where our business calls us. A common ladder placed against the wall leads to the garret. A deer's foot hangs by the door; a straw mat and wooden coat-rack furnish the landing. The first door being opened we enter a dark and unfurnished room; it is the one whose window is not lighted. It serves as antechamber and leads into a second room, the appearance and furniture of which deserve all our attention.

The floor is of tiles, instead of being inlaid; the doors are coarsely painted; there are three armchairs of white wood, upholstered in yellow velvet, and a poor sofa, whose cushions have become thin and creased by long use. Two portraits hung on the wall first attract our attention. A candle and a lamp, placed the one on a three-legged stand, the other on the mantel-piece, combine their rays so as to make these two portraits two centres of light. The first of these was a well-known and strikingly correct likeness of Henri III. king of France and Poland — with a cap on his head, face long and pale, pointed beard, and a ruff round his neck. Under it is inscribed in black letters, on a frame poorly gilded, "HENRI DE VALOIS."

The other portrait, more recently gilded, as fresh-looking as the other was ancient, represented a young woman with black eyes, a nose straight and delicately formed, high cheek-bones, and a mouth expressing circumspection. Her head was dressed, or rather crushed, by an edifice of hair and ribbons in comparison with which the cap of Henri III. was like a mole-hill beside a pyramid. Under this portrait could be read in black letters, "JEANNE DE VALOIS."

If you wish, after inspecting the fireless hearth, the cheap cotton bed-curtains, ornamented with yellowed green damask, — if you wish to know what connection there may be between those portraits and the occupants of that fifth story, it is necessary only to turn toward a small oak table upon which a woman, plainly dressed, rests her left arm while she examines several sealed letters, and takes note of their addresses. That young woman is the original of the portrait.

A few steps off, in an attitude half-curious, half-respectful, stands a little old woman, apparently about sixty years old.

"JEANNE DE VALOIS," says the inscription; but if this lady be indeed a Valois, one wonders how ever the portrait of Henri III., the sybarite king, the ruffed voluptuary, could endure, observing it only from his portrait, the sight of so much poverty suffered by a person not only of his race, but bearing his name.

In her person, however, this lady of the fifth story did no discredit to the origin which she claimed. She had white and delicate hands, which from time to time she warmed by placing them under her crossed arms; her feet also, which were encased in rather coquettish velvet slippers, she endeavored to warm by stamping on the tiled floor, shining and cold as the ice that covered Paris.

The wind whistled through all the old doors, and penetrated the crevices of the shaking windows; and the old servant sadly shrugged her shoulders as she looked at the fireless hearth. As to the lady, the mistress of the apartment, she continued counting the letters and reading their addresses. After reading each address she made a little calculation.

"Madame de Misery," she murmured; "first lady of the bedchamber to her Majesty, — I cannot expect more than six louis from her, for she has already given to me

once;" and she sighed. "Madame Patrix, lady's maid to her Majesty, two louis; Monsieur d'Ormesson, an audience; Monsieur de Calonne, some good advice; Monsieur de Rohan, a visit, — at least we will try to induce him," said she, smiling. "Well, then, I think I may hope for eight louis within a week." Then looking up, "Dame Clotilde," she said, "snuff this candle."

The old woman did as she was bid, and then resumed her place.

This kind of inquisition seemed to annoy the young woman, for she said, "Do go, my dear, and see if you cannot find the end of a wax candle for me; this tallow is odious."

"There is none," replied the old woman.

"But just look."

"Where?"

"In the antechamber."

"It is very cold there."

"Eh, stop! some one is ringing," said the young woman.

"Madame is mistaken," replied the obstinate old woman.

"I thought I heard it, Dame Clotilde;" then, abandoning the attempt to move the old woman, she turned again to her calculations. "Eight louis! three I owe for the rent." She took her pen and wrote. "Three louis; five promised to Monsieur de La Motte, to enable him to endure his stay at Bar-sur-Aube. Poor fellow, our marriage has not enriched him as yet, but patience!" and she smiled again, and looked at herself in the mirror that hung between the two portraits. "Well, then," she continued, "I want one louis for fares from Versailles to Paris and back again." And she wrote that additional figure in the column of expenses. "Living for a week, one louis; dress,

and gifts to the porters of the houses where I go, four louis. Is that all? Let me add." But in the midst of her addition she interrupted herself: "Some one is ringing, I tell you."

"No, Madame," replied the old woman. "It is below, on the next floor."

"Four, six, eleven, fourteen louis; there are six less than I need, — and my entire wardrobe is to be renewed, and this old brute to be paid off and dismissed." Then, suddenly, "But I tell you some one is ringing, you miserable creature!" she cried out angrily.

Even the old woman could deny it no longer; she hobbled off to open the door, while her mistress, agile as a squirrel, rapidly cleared away all the papers, and after a rapid glance about the room, to assure herself that everything was in order, seated herself on the sofa, assuming the humble and melancholy attitude of a person resigned but suffering.

It was, however, only her body that reposed; her eyes, restless and unquiet, questioned the mirror in which the door was reflected, and her ears were quickened to catch the smallest sound.

At last the door was opened, and she heard a young and sweet voice saying, "Is it here that Madame la Comtesse de La Motte lives?"

"Madame la Comtesse de La Motte Valois," replied Clotilde, with a nasal tone.

"It is the same person, my good woman; is Madame de La Motte at home?"

"Yes, Madame; she is too ill to go out."

During this colloquy, the pretended invalid saw reflected in the glass the figure of a lady talking to Clotilde, unquestionably belonging to the higher ranks. She immediately left the sofa, and seated herself in an armchair, so

that the stranger might have the seat of honor. While accomplishing this movement, she saw her visitor turn round, and heard her say to some one behind, "You can enter, Madame; this is the place." And the two ladies we have before seen asking the way to the Rue Saint Claude prepared to enter the room.

"Whom shall I announce to the countess?" said Clotilde.

"Announce a sister of charity," said the elder lady.

"From Paris?"

"No, from Versailles."

Clotilde entered the room, and the strangers followed her.

Jeanne de Valois seemed to rise with difficulty from her seat to receive her visitors. Clotilde placed chairs for them, and then withdrew so slowly that one could easily see that she intended to remain near the door, in order to hear what might follow.

CHAPTER III.

JEANNE DE LA MOTTE DE VALOIS.

The first care of Jeanne de La Motte, when she could with propriety raise her eyes, was to examine the faces of her visitors, so as to gather what she could of their character. The elder lady, who might have been, as we have said, about thirty-two years of age, was remarkably beautiful, although at first sight an air of hauteur detracted slightly from the charm of her expression; at least, so Jeanne thought, from the little she could see of her face. For the lady, preferring one of the armchairs to the sofa, had placed herself beyond the range of the rays of light emitted by the lamp, and sat in a corner of the room, having drawn over her forehead the hood of her cloak, which thus shaded her face. But she held her head so proudly, her eyes were so expressive and so naturally dilated, that all details were effaced, and at a cursory glance she was to be recognized as of a good family, and even of a noble family.

Her companion, less timid, in appearance at least, although four or five years younger, was not less beautiful. Her complexion was charming; her hair drawn back from her temples showed to advantage the perfect oval of her face. Two large blue eyes, calm and serene; a well-formed mouth, indicating great frankness of disposition, but to which discretion had been added by education; a nose, which in form rivalled that of the Venus de Medicis,

— such was the other face which presented itself to the gaze of Jeanne de Valois.

She inquired gently to what happy circumstance she owed the honor of their visit.

The elder lady signed to the younger, who thereupon said, "Madame, for I believe you are married —"

"I have the honor to be the wife of Monsieur le Comte de La Motte, Madame, an excellent gentleman."

"Well, Madame la Comtesse, we are at the head of a charitable institution, and having heard concerning your condition things that interest us, we wished to have more precise details on the subject."

Jeanne paused a moment before making a reply. "Ladies," she said, noticing the reserve of the second visitor, "you see there the portrait of Henri III., — that is to say, of the brother of my ancestor; for I am truly of the race of Valois, as you doubtless have been told." And she waited for the next question, looking at her visitors with a sort of proud humility.

"Madame," said the grave and sweet voice of the elder lady, "is it true, as we have also heard, that your mother was housekeeper at a place called Fontette, near Bar-sur-Seine?"

Jeanne colored at this question, but replied at once, and without embarrassment, "It is true, Madame; and," she went on, "as Marie Fossel, my mother, was possessed of rare beauty, my father fell in love with her, and married her. It is by my father that I am nobly descended; he was a Saint Remy de Valois, direct descendant of the Valois who were on the throne."

"But how have you been reduced to this degree of poverty, Madame."

"Alas! that is easily told. You are not ignorant that after the accession of Henri IV., by which the crown

passed from the house of Valois to that of Bourbon, there still remained many branches of the fallen family, obscure doubtless, but incontestably springing from the same root as the four brothers who all perished so miserably."

The two ladies made a sign of assent.

"Then," continued Jeanne, "these remnants of the Valois fearing, in spite of their obscurity, to be obnoxious to the reigning family, changed their name of Valois into that of Remy, which they took from the name of an estate; and they may be traced under this name down to my grandfather, who, seeing the monarchy so firmly established, and the old branch forgotten, thought he need no longer deprive himself of his illustrious name, his only inheritance. He resumed, therefore, the name of Valois, and bore that name in poverty and obscurity in a distant province, while no one at the court of France dreamed that beyond the radiance of the throne there vegetated a descendant of the ancient kings of France, who, if not the most glorious in the history of the monarchy, were at all events the most unfortunate."

Jeanne paused after saying these words. She had spoken with a simplicity and mildness which created a favorable impression.

"You have, doubtless, your proofs already arranged, Madame," said the elder lady, with kindness, but at the same time looking fixedly at her who claimed to be descended from the Valois.

"Oh, Madame!" she replied, with a bitter smile, "proofs are not wanting. My father arranged them, and left them to me as his sole legacy. But of what use are proofs of a truth which no one is willing to recognize?"

"Your father is, then, dead?" asked the younger lady.

"Alas! yes."

"Did he die in the provinces?"

"No, Madame."

"At Paris, then?"

"Yes."

"In this room?"

"No, Madame; my father, Baron de Valois, great-nephew of King Henri III., died of want and hunger."

"Impossible!" cried both ladies, at the same time.

"And not here," continued Jeanne; "not in this poor retreat, — not in his own bed, poor as that might be. No, my father died side by side with misery and suffering. My father died in the Hôtel Dieu!"

The ladies uttered an exclamation of surprise and distress.

Satisfied with the effect produced by her story on her visitors, and with the skill she had used in leading up to the denouement, Jeanne sat with her eyes lowered, her hands hanging motionless. The elder of the strangers regarded her attentively, and seeing nothing affected or vulgar in her grief, which appeared so simple and natural, she said: "From what you tell me, Madame, you have experienced, it is evident, great misfortunes; and the death of your father, especially — "

"Oh, if you heard all the story of my life, Madame, you would see that my father's death does not rank among its greatest misfortunes."

"What, Madame! you regard as a minor evil the loss of a father?" said the elder lady, with a frown.

"Yes, Madame; and in saying that I speak as an affectionate daughter, for my father in dying was delivered from all the ills which he experienced in this life, and which continue to assail his unhappy family. I feel, therefore, in the midst of the grief which his loss causes me, a certain joy in knowing that my father is dead, and that the descendant of kings is no longer obliged to beg his bread."

"To beg his bread?"

"Yes, Madame; I say it without shame, for in all our misfortunes there was no fault in my father or myself."

"But you do not speak of your mother?"

"Well, with the same frankness with which I told you just now that I blessed God for taking my father, I complain to him because he left my mother alive."

The two ladies looked at each other, almost shuddering at these strange words.

"Would it be indiscreet, Madame, to ask you for a more detailed account of your misfortunes?" asked the elder lady.

"The indiscretion, Madame, would be in me, if I fatigued your ears with a recital of sorrow which can have no interest for you."

"I listen, Madame," said the elder lady, so commandingly that her companion looked at her as if to warn her to be more guarded. Indeed, Madame de La Motte had been struck with this imperious accent, and stared at her with some astonishment.

"I listen, Madame," the lady repeated in a more gentle tone, "if you will do me the favor to begin;" and yielding to a sense of discomfort, caused doubtless by the cold, the lady who had just spoken restlessly moved her feet, chilled by contact with the damp floor. The younger lady thereupon pushed toward her a sort of foot-carpet which happened to be near her chair, — an attention which drew from her companion a warning glance. "Keep that carpet, sister," said she, pushing it back again, "you are more delicate than I."

"Indeed, Madame," said Jeanne, "it grieves me much to see you suffer from the cold; but wood is six francs higher than ever, and is now sold at seventy francs a cord. My stock was exhausted a week ago."

"You said, Madame, that you were unhappy in having a mother," said the elder lady, returning to the subject.

"Yes, Madame. Doubtless such a blasphemy shocks you much, does it not?" said Jeanne; "but hear my explanation, since you desire it. I have already had the honor to tell you that my father married beneath his rank."

"Yes, in marrying his housekeeper."

"Well, Marie Fossel, my mother, instead of feeling gratified and proud of the honor he had done her, began by ruining my father, which certainly was not difficult, while she satisfied with the little that her husband possessed the hunger of her caprices. Then having compelled him to sell everything, down to his last bit of ground, she induced him to go to Paris to claim the rights to which his name entitled him. My father was easily persuaded; perhaps he hoped in the justice of the king. He came, then, having first turned all he possessed into money. He had, besides me, another daughter and a son. The son, unfortunate like me, vegetates in the lowest ranks of the army; the daughter, my poor sister, was abandoned on the evening of our departure before the house of a neighboring farmer, her godfather.

"The journey exhausted our little resources. My father wore himself out in fruitless appeals. We scarcely ever saw him at home; and in his absence my mother, to whom a victim was necessary, vented her discontent and ill-humor upon me. She even reproached me with what I ate, and I came by degrees to prefer to eat only bread, or even not to eat at all, rather than sit down at our poor table. But my mother found no lack of pretexts for punishment; for the slightest fault I was unmercifully beaten. The neighbors, thinking to serve me, told my father of the treatment I experienced. He endeavored to protect me

against my mother, and did not know that by his interference he changed my enemy of the moment into an unrelenting tormentor. Alas! I could not warn him of what was for my interest; I was too young, too childish. I comprehended nothing; I experienced effects without seeking to know the cause. I knew the hardship, and that was all.

"At last my father fell ill, and was confined first to the house, and then to his bed. My mother banished me from his room on the pretext that I disturbed him. She made me now learn a sentence which she emphasized with blows and bruises; and when I knew that sentence by heart, — which instinctively I was unwilling to learn, — though my eyes were red with tears, she would drive me out into the street with blows, ordering me to repeat it to each passer-by if I did not wish to be beaten to death."

"Horrible! horrible!" murmured the younger of the two ladies.

"And what was this sentence?" asked the elder lady.

"It was this, Madame: 'Have pity on a little orphan who descends in a direct line from Henri de Valois.'"

"What a shame!" cried the elder lady, with a gesture of disgust.

"But what effect did this sentence have on those to whom it was addressed?" inquired the younger.

"Some listened and pitied me; others were angry and threatened me; others, more compassionate than the first, warned me that I ran a great risk in repeating such words, — but I knew no other danger than that of disobeying my mother."

"And what was the result?"

"*Mon Dieu!* Madame, that which my mother had desired; I brought back to the house a little money, and the

frightful prospect which my father had before him — the hospital — receded for a few days."

The features of the elder of the two young women became contracted; tears came to the eyes of the younger.

"At length, Madame, notwithstanding the relief it brought my father, this hideous trade became revolting to me. One day, instead of repeating my accustomed phrase, I sat on the doorstep all the time, and returned in the evening empty-handed. My mother beat me so that the next day I fell ill; then my poor father, deprived of all resources, was obliged to go to the Hôtel Dieu, where he died."

"Oh, what a horrible history!" murmured the two ladies.

"What became of you after your father's death?" asked the younger lady.

"God took pity upon me. A month after my father's death my mother ran away with a soldier, her lover, abandoning my brother and myself."

"You found yourselves orphans?"

"Oh, Madame, we, unlike others, were orphans only because we had a mother. Public charity adopted us. But as begging was repugnant to us, we begged only enough to procure the necessities of life. God commands his creatures to endeavor to live."

"Alas!"

"What shall I tell you, Madame? One day I saw a carriage going slowly along toward the Faubourg Saint Marcel. There were four footmen behind, and a beautiful lady inside; I held out my hand to her for charity. She questioned me, and my reply and my name seemed to strike her with surprise, and then with incredulity. She asked for my address, and the next day made inquiries, and finding that I had told her the truth, she took charge of my brother and myself; she placed my brother in the army

and me with a dressmaker. We were both saved from starvation."

"Was not this lady Madame de Boulainvilliers?"

"It was."

"She is dead, I believe?"

"Yes, and her death plunged me again into the abyss."

"Her husband still lives, and is rich."

"Ah, Madame, it is to him that I owe my later misfortunes, as to my mother I owe the miseries of my childhood. I had grown tall and perhaps attractive, and he wished to put a price upon his benefits, which I refused to pay. It was at just this time that Madame de Boulainvilliers died; and I — I, whom she had married to a brave and loyal soldier, Monsieur de La Motte — found myself, separated as I was from my husband, more desolate after her death than I had been after that of my father.

"This is my story, Madame. I have made it short. A tale of suffering is always tedious, and is not to be inflicted on those who are happy, though they be as benevolent as you, ladies, seem to be."

A long silence followed this conclusion of Madame de La Motte's story. The elder lady was the first to speak. "Where, then, is your husband?" she asked.

"He is in garrison, at Bar-sur-Aube; he serves in the gendarmerie, and is waiting, like myself, in hopes of better times."

"But you have laid your case before the court?"

"Certainly."

"The name of Valois must have awakened some sympathy?"

"I know not, Madame, what sentiments it may have awakened, for I have received no answer to any of my petitions."

"And yet you have seen the ministers, the king, the queen?"

"No one. Everywhere I have failed."

"You cannot beg, however."

"No, Madame; I have lost the habit, but —"

"But what?"

"But I can die of hunger, like my poor father."

"You have no child?"

"No, Madame; and my husband, by getting killed in the service of his king, will find for himself at least a glorious end to our miseries."

"Can you, Madame, — I beg pardon if I seem intrusive, — but can you bring forward the proofs of your genealogy?"

Jeanne rose, opened a drawer, and drew out some papers which she presented to the lady, who rose to come nearer the light that she might examine them; but seeing that Jeanne eagerly seized this opportunity to observe her more clearly than she had yet been able to do, turned away as if the light hurt her eyes, thus turning her back to Madame de La Motte. In this position she examined all the papers, one after the other.

"But," said she, at last, "these are only copies. I do not find a single original."

"Oh, Madame, I have the originals safe, and am ready to produce them —"

"If any important occasion should present itself, you mean?" said the lady, smiling.

"It is, doubtless, Madame, an important occasion which procures me the honor of your visit; but these papers are so precious —"

"That you cannot show them to every stranger. I understand you."

"Oh, Madame!" cried the countess, who at last had

obtained a clear view of her protectress's face, full of dignity, "I cannot think of treating you as a stranger; you shall see them;" and opening a secret drawer above the other, she drew out the originals, which were enclosed in an old portfolio, on which were the arms of the Valois.

The lady took them, and after examining them said, "You are right; these papers are perfectly regular, and I advise you to exhibit them without fail to the proper authorities."

"And what, in your opinion, Madame, should I gain by that?"

"Why, without any doubt, a pension for yourself, and advancement for Monsieur de La Motte, if he prove worthy of it."

"My husband is an honorable man, Madame, and has never failed in his military duties."

"It is enough, Madame," said the sister of charity, drawing her hood still more over her face. Madame de La Motte anxiously watched her every movement. She saw her feel in her pocket and draw out first the embroidered handkerchief with which she had shielded her face when in the sledge, then a small roll about an inch in diameter, and three or four in length, which she placed on the chiffonniere, saying, "The treasurer of our charity authorizes me, Madame, to offer you this small assistance, until you shall obtain something better."

Madame de La Motte threw a rapid glance at the little roll. "Three-franc pieces," thought she, "and there must be fifty, or even a hundred of them. So here are a hundred and fifty, perhaps three hundred, francs fallen from the sky. The roll is somewhat short for a hundred pieces, but it is also too long for fifty."

While she was thus thinking, the two ladies moved

quickly into the outer room, where Clotilde had fallen asleep in her chair.

The candle was burning out in the socket, and the smell which came from it made the ladies draw out their smelling-bottles. Jeanne woke Clotilde, who seized the remnant of the candle and held it like a beacon light over the gloomy staircase, notwithstanding the protests of the two strangers, whom she lighted and at the same time poisoned.

"Au revoir, Madame la Comtesse," they cried, as they hurried downstairs.

"Where may I have the honor of coming to thank you?" asked Jeanne.

"We will let you know," replied the elder lady, going down as fast as possible.

Madame de La Motte ran back into her room, impatient to examine her rouleau, but her foot struck against something which rolled from the mat on to the floor. On picking it up and holding it to the lamp, she found it to be a gold box, round, flat, and plainly ornamented. There were some chocolate confections in it, and evidently it also contained a secret compartment. The countess at last found the spring, and the lid to the secret compartment flew open and disclosed the portrait of a woman of masculine beauty and imperious majesty. The coiffure was German, and she wore a collar like that of an order. A monogram, composed of an M and a T encircled by a laurel wreath, ornamented the inside of the box. Madame de La Motte did not doubt, from the resemblance of the portrait to the lady who had just left her, that it was that of her mother or grandmother. She ran to the stairs to call to the ladies, but hearing the street-door shut, she ran back thinking to call them from the window, but arrived there only in time to see a cabriolet going rapidly away.

The countess, no longer hoping to recall her two protectresses, looked again at the box, and concluded that she would send it to Versailles. Then seizing the rouleau, which was lying on the chiffonniere, "I was not mistaken," she said; "there are only fifty crowns here." When she opened it, she uttered a cry of joy, "Double louis! fifty double louis! two thousand and four hundred francs!" and transported at the sight of more gold than she had ever seen before in her life, she remained with clasped hands and open lips. "A hundred louis!" she repeated; "these ladies are, then, very rich. Oh, I will find them again!"

CHAPTER IV.

BÉLUS.

MADAME DE LA MOTTE was not wrong in thinking that the cabriolet which she saw going away contained the two sisters of charity. They had, in fact, found waiting for them near the house a cabriolet, of the style common at that period, — that is to say, with high wheels, a light body, elevated dasher, and a convenient seat for the groom who rode behind.

This cabriolet drawn by a magnificent bay horse of Irish breed, short-tailed and plump, had been brought to the Rue Saint Claude by the same servant who had driven the sledge, and whom the sister of charity had called Weber, as we have stated above.

Weber was holding the horse by the bit when the ladies arrived, and was trying to restrain the impatience of the spirited animal who with nervous foot pawed the snow, gradually hardening since the coming on of night. When the two ladies appeared, —

"Matame," said Weber, "I hat intented to pring Scibio, who is ferry gentle and easy to manage. But Scibio hort von of his legs last efening. Only Pélus vas left, and Pélus, he pe hart to manage."

"Oh, for me, Weber," said the elder of the two ladies, "you know that is of no consequence; I have a strong hand, and am used to driving."

"I know dat Matame trives ferry vell, but de roats be ferry pad. Vere is Matame going?"

"To Versailles."

"Py de poolfards, den?"

"By no means, Weber. It freezes, and the boulevards will be covered with ice. The streets will be better, thanks to the thousands of pedestrians who keep the snow from freezing. Come, quick, Weber, quick!"

Weber held the horse for the ladies to get in, then jumped up behind, and they set off at a rapid pace.

"Well, Andrée, what do you think of the countess?" asked the elder lady.

"I think, Madame," she replied, "that Madame de La Motte is poor and unfortunate."

"She has good manners, has she not?"

"Yes, doubtless."

"You are somewhat cold about her, Andrée."

"If I must speak sincerely, there is a look of cunning in her face that does not please me."

"Oh, you are always difficult to please, Andrée; to please you, one must have every good quality. Now I find the little countess interesting and simple, both in her pride and in her humility."

"It is fortunate for her, Madame, that she has succeeded in pleasing your —"

"Take care!" cried the lady, at the same time endeavoring to check her horse, which nearly ran over a street porter at the corner of the Rue Saint Antoine.

"Dake gare!" shouted Weber with the voice of a stentor, and the cabriolet continued its course, followed by the imprecations of the man who had so narrowly escaped; and several other voices being added to his, a furious clamor was raised. But in a few seconds Bélus placed between his mistress and these blasphemers all the distance between the Rue Sainte Catherine and the Place Baudoyer.

There the street divides, and the skilful driver continued her rapid course down the Rue de la Tixéranderie, a narrow street, crowded, and not at all aristocratic. And therefore, notwithstanding her often repeated, "Take care!" notwithstanding Weber's loud roars of warning, one could hear only the furious cries of the foot-passengers, "Oh, the cabriolet! Down with the cabriolet!"

Bélus kept his course, and his driver, though her hand was delicate as a child's, urged him, rapidly and skilfully, through the pools of melted snow or over the more dangerous ice. And yet not the slightest accident had happened. A brilliant lantern threw its light forward upon the course, though this was an excess of precaution which the police had not yet required. No accident, we say, had happened. No passing carriage had been hit, not a post grazed, not a foot-passenger hurt. It was wonderful driving, and yet cries and threats were constantly vociferated.

The cabriolet passed with the same rapidity and the same good fortune through the Rue Saint Médéric, the Rue Saint Martin, and the Rue Aubry-le-Boucher.

It may seem to our readers that in the more civilized quarters of the city the hatred shown toward the aristocratic equipage would become less ferocious. On the contrary, Bélus had but just entered the Rue de la Ferronerie when Weber, always pursued by the vociferations of the populace, noticed that groups were formed as the cabriolet went by. Some had even the appearance of running after it as if to stop it.

But Weber was unwilling to disturb his mistress. He observed her steadiness and skill, and how adroitly she glided through among all those obstacles, animate and inanimate, which are at once the despair and the triumph of the Parisian coachman. As to Bélus, steady on his limbs of steel, he had not once slipped, so careful was the

guiding hand in directing his course among the inequalities of the surface.

The vociferations of the people increased. The lady who held the reins, attributing that hostility to some trivial cause, such as the severity of the weather and the general discontent, resolved to get through with the annoyance as soon as possible. She clicked with her tongue, and on that signal Bélus jumped, and changed his pace to a rapid trot. The shops seemed to fly by them; the foot-passengers leaped aside. The warning shouts, "Take care! Take care!" were continued.

The cabriolet had almost reached the Palais-Royal, and had just passed the end of the Rue du Coq-Saint Honoré where one of the finest of the snow obelisks still proudly stood, though its top was narrowed by the thaw, — it was like a stick of candy which children draw to a sharp point by sucking. This obelisk was surmounted by a glorious ornament of ribbons, — somewhat faded, to be sure, — which supported a placard on which the scrivener of that quarter had written in large characters the following quatrain, hung between two lanterns: —

"Queen, whose beauty is beyond thy grace,
Near a good king take here thy proper place.
If this frail structure be of snow and ice,
Our love for thee is not at all like this."

It was there that Bélus encountered the first serious obstacle. The obelisk, which they were just then lighting up, had attracted a crowd of spectators, who had massed themselves so that it was impossible to go through them at a trot. Bélus was obliged to walk.

But the crowd had seen Bélus coming on at lightning-speed; they had heard the pursuing cries; and although in presence of this obstacle he had stopped short, the sight of the cabriolet seemed to produce upon the crowd the

worst possible effect. However, this time the crowd opened and gave way.

The next obstacle was at the gates of the Palais-Royal, where, in a court-yard which had been thrown open, were a host of beggars crowding round fires which had been lighted there, and receiving soup, which the servants of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans were distributing to them in earthen basins. But as in Paris a crowd collects to see everything, the number of the spectators of this scene far exceeded that of the actors.

The cabriolet, having surmounted the first obstacle, was obliged to stop at the second, like a ship in the midst of breakers. At the same time the cries which till then the two women had heard only as a vague, confused noise, came to them distinctly from the midst of the mob: "Down with the cabriolet! Down with those that crush the poor!"

"Can it be that those cries are addressed to us?" said the elder lady to her companion.

"Indeed, Madame, I fear so," replied the latter.

"Have we, then, run over any one?"

"I am sure we have not."

"Down with the cabriolet! Down with the crushers!" cried the mob, furiously.

A crowd soon gathered round them, and some even seized Bélus by the reins, who but little pleased by the touch of those rude hands pawed the ground and foamed with rage.

"To the commissary! to the commissary!" cried a voice.

The two ladies looked at each other in terror. Then a thousand voices repeated: "To the commissary! to the commissary!"

Curious heads peeped under the hood of the cabriolet. Remarks began to circulate through the crowd.

"Hold! they are women," said one.

"Yes; Soubise's dolls, D'Hennin's mistresses."

"Opera girls, doubtless," said others, "who think they have a right to crush the poor, because they receive ten thousand francs a month to pay hospital expenses."

A general shout hailed these words.

The two ladies manifested different emotions in that confusion.

The younger lady sank back trembling with fear; the other bent resolutely forward, with frowning brows and compressed lips.

"Oh, Madame!" cried her companion, drawing her back, "for Heaven's sake, take care!"

"To the commissary! to the commissary!" the mob continued crying furiously. "Let us know who they are."

"Ah, Madame, we are lost!" said the younger to her companion.

"Courage, Andrée! courage!" replied the other.

"But they will see you, will recognize you, perhaps."

"Look through the windows, and see if Weber is still there."

"He is trying to get down, but the mob surrounds him. Ah, here he comes."

"Weber," said the lady, in German, "help us to get out."

The man vigorously pushed aside those nearest the carriage, and opened the door. The ladies sprang lightly to the ground. Meantime the mob gave its attention to the horse and the cabriolet, the body of which they began to destroy.

"What, in Heaven's name, does it all mean? Do you understand it, Weber?" said the elder lady, still in German.

"Upon my word, no, Matame," he replied, much more at ease while speaking in his native tongue, and struggling to free a passage for them to pass.

"But they are not men, they are wild beasts," continued the lady; "with what can they reproach me?"

She was answered by a voice, whose polite and gentlemanly tone contrasted strangely with the savage murmurs of the people, and which said, in excellent German, "They reproach you, Madame, with having braved the police order which appeared this morning, and which prohibited, until spring, the use of cabriolets, which are always dangerous, but are especially fatal in this frost, when people can hardly escape being run over."

The lady turned around to see whence came that courteous voice in the midst of all those threatening cries. She perceived a young officer, who, in order to approach her, must have battled as valiantly as Weber had done to maintain his position. The graceful and distinguished appearance, the lofty stature and the martial air of the young man pleased the lady, who hastened to reply, in German, "Oh, *mon Dieu!* Monsieur, I was entirely ignorant of this order."

"You are a foreigner, Madame?" inquired the young officer.

"Yes, Monsieur; but tell me what I must do? They are destroying my cabriolet."

"You must let them destroy it, Madame, and take advantage of that time to escape. The people are furious just now against the rich, who display their luxury in presence of the general misery; and on the pretext of your breaking this regulation, would conduct you before the commissary."

"Oh, never!" cried Andrée.

"Then," said the officer, laughing, "profit by the space which I shall make in the crowd and vanish."

These words were spoken in an easy manner which enabled the strangers to understand that the officer had heard the remarks made about the mistresses of Soubise and D'Hennin. But it was not a time to be punctilious.

"Give us your arm, then, Monsieur, to the nearest place where we can hire a carriage," said the elder lady, in a voice full of authority.

"I was going to make your horse rear, and thereby clear you a passage," said the young man, who did not much wish to take the charge of escorting them through the crowd; "the people will become yet more enraged if they hear us speaking in a language unknown to them."

"Weber," cried the lady, in a firm voice, "make Bélus rear to disperse the crowd."

"And then, Matame?"

"Remain till we are gone."

"Bud dey vill destroy de garriage."

"Let them; what does that matter? Save Bélus if you can, but yourself above all."

"Yes, Matame;" and at the same moment he tickled the irritable Irish horse, who sprang into the midst of the crowd, and overturned the most eager among them, who were clinging to the bridle and to the shafts. At that moment the terror and confusion were very great.

"Your arm, Monsieur!" again said the lady, to the officer. "Come on, little one," turning to Andrée.

"Let us go then, courageous woman," murmured, in a low voice, the young officer, who immediately gave his arm, with real admiration, to her who asked for it.

In a few minutes he had conducted them to a cab-stand; but the men were all asleep on their seats, and the horses, with drooping heads and half-closed eyes, were awaiting their meagre evening rations.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROAD TO VERSAILLES.

THE ladies were free from the crowd for the present; but there was some danger that they might be followed and recognized, when the same tumult would doubtless be renewed, and escape a second time more difficult. The young officer knew this, and therefore hastened to awaken a coachman, held to his seat by the cold even more than by sleep. The cold was so intense that, contrary to the custom of coachmen generally on the alert to rob one another of customers, not one of the automedons at twenty-four sous an hour made any movement, — not even the one to whom the officer addressed himself. He seized the coachman by the collar of his poor overcoat, and shook him so violently that at last he roused him from his stupor.

"Holloa! Ho!" cried the young man in his ear, seeing that he gave signs of life.

"Here, Master, here," said the coachman, dreaming still, and reeling on his box like a drunken man.

"Where do you wish to go, ladies?" asked the officer.

"To Versailles," said the elder lady, still speaking German.

"To Versailles!" cried the coachman; "you said 'to Versailles'?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, to Versailles!" repeated the coachman; "four miles and a half over this ice. No, I would rather not."

"We will pay well," said the lady.

This was repeated to the coachman, in French, by the young officer.

"But how much?" said the coachman; "you see it is not only going, I must come back again."

"A louis; is that enough?" said the younger lady, to the officer, who, turning to the coachman, said, "These ladies offer you a louis."

"Well, that will do, though I risk breaking my horses' legs."

"Why, you rascal, you are entitled to only three francs for going from here to the Château de la Muette, which is half-way. You can see by a little calculation that if you are paid for going and for returning you are entitled to only twelve francs, and you are offered twenty-four."

"Oh, do not stop to bargain!" said the elder lady; "two louis, three louis, twenty louis, provided he will start at once and go on without stopping."

"One is enough, Madame," replied the officer; and then, turning to the coachman, "Come down, you rogue, and open the door."

"I will be paid first," said the man.

"You will!" said the officer, fiercely.

"It is my right."

The officer made a forward movement.

"Oh, let us pay!" said the lady, putting her hand in her pocket. She turned pale. "Oh, *mon Dieu!*" she said, in a low tone, "I have not my purse!"

"Really?"

"And you, Andrée, have you yours?"

The young woman searched, in her turn, with the same anxiety.

"I — I have not mine either!"

"Search all your pockets."

"It is useless!" cried the young woman, with vexation, for she saw that the officer was observing them, and that the coachman was opening his big mouth in a grin of self-congratulation over his precaution. The two ladies searched themselves in vain. Neither of them could find a sou. The officer saw them get impatient, turn red, and grow pale. The situation was becoming complicated.

The ladies were about to offer a gold chain as a pledge, when the young officer, to spare them that humiliation, drew out a louis and offered it to the man, who thereupon got down and opened the door.

The ladies thanked him warmly, and got in.

"And now, you rascal, drive these ladies carefully and honestly."

The ladies looked at each other in terror; they could not bear to see their protector leave them.

"Oh, Madame!" said Andrée, "do not let him go away."

"But why not? We will ask for his address, and return him his louis to-morrow, with a little note of thanks, which you shall write."

"But, Madame, suppose the coachman should not keep faith with us, and should turn us out half-way, what would become of us?"

"Oh, we will take his number!"

"Yes, Madame, I do not deny that you could have him punished afterwards; but meanwhile you would not reach Versailles, and what would they think?"

The elder of the two ladies reflected. "It is true," she said.

The officer advanced to take leave.

"Monsieur," said Andrée, "one word more, if you please."

"At your orders, Madame," replied the officer, visibly

annoyed, but maintaining in his manner, in his tone, and even in the accent of his voice, the most exquisite politeness.

"Monsieur," Andrée continued, "you cannot refuse us one more favor after serving us so much?"

"What is it, Madame?"

"We are afraid of the coachman, who seems so unwilling to go."

"You need not fear," replied he; "I have his number, and if he does not behave well, apply to me."

"To you, Monsieur?" said Andrée, in French, forgetting herself; "we do not even know your name."

"You speak French!" exclaimed the young man, stupefied; "and you have been condemning me all this time to blunder on in German. Oh, really, Madame, that was unkind!"

"Excuse us, Monsieur," said the other lady, coming to Andrée's rescue; "but you must see that, though not perhaps foreigners, we are strangers in Paris, and above all, out of place in a hired carriage. You are sufficiently a man of the world to see that we are in an unfamiliar situation. To oblige us half-way would be only to disoblige us. To be less discreet than you have been up to the present moment would be indiscreet. We judge well of you, Monsieur; be pleased not to judge us unkindly. If you can do us a service do it without reserve, or permit us to thank you and apply elsewhere."

"Madame," said the officer, struck with the tone of the unknown lady, at once charming and noble, "dispose of me."

"Then, Monsieur, have the kindness to get into the carriage with us and accompany us to Versailles."

The officer instantly placed himself opposite to them, and directed the man to drive on.

After proceeding in silence for some little time he began to feel himself surrounded with delicate and delicious perfumes, and gradually began to think better of the ladies' position. "They are," thought he, "ladies who have been detained late at some rendezvous, and are now anxious to regain Versailles, a little frightened and a little ashamed. But, then, how does it happen that these ladies," continued the officer, speaking to himself, "if indeed they are ladies of some distinction, are found riding in a cabriolet, and driving? Oh, to that there is an answer! The cabriolet was too narrow for three persons, and two ladies would not incommode themselves to place a lackey between them. But no money upon either of them! — a serious objection which calls for reflection. However, there was a servant behind, and probably he carried the purse. The carriage, which by this time is broken in pieces, was certainly a very elegant one; and the horse could not have been worth less than one hundred and fifty louis, — therefore they must be rich, so that the accidental want of money proves nothing. But why speak a foreign language when they must be French? However, that at least shows a good education. It is not common for women of intrigue to speak so pure German, and French like native Parisians; besides, there is an air of distinction about them. The supplication of the younger one was touching, and the request of the other was nobly imperious. Indeed, I begin to feel it dangerous to pass two or three hours in a carriage with two such pretty women, — pretty and discreet also; for they do not speak, but wait for me to begin."

On their part the ladies were doubtless thinking of the young officer as he was thinking of them; for just as he had arrived at these conclusions, the elder lady said to her companion, but this time in English, —

"Really, my dear, this coachman crawls along; we shall never reach Versailles. Our poor companion must be bored to death."

"Particularly," answered Andrée, smiling, "as our conversation has not been very amusing."

"Do you not think he has a most distinguished air?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Besides, he wears the uniform of a naval officer, and all naval officers are of good family. He looks well in it too, for he is very handsome, is he not?"

The young lady was about to reply, and doubtless in the same flattering strain, when she was stopped by a gesture of the officer, who said, in excellent English, "Your pardon, ladies, but I must tell you that I understand English perfectly. I do not, however, know Spanish; therefore if you are acquainted with and like to speak in that language, you at least will be sure of not being understood."

"Oh, Monsieur," replied the elder lady, laughing, "we had no harm to say of you, as you must have perceived; we will therefore not be too ceremonious, and if we have anything to say we will say it in French."

"Thanks, Madame; but if my presence be irksome to you —"

"You cannot suppose that, Monsieur, since we begged you to accompany us."

"Exacted it, even," said the younger of the two ladies.

"Oh, Madame, you make me ashamed. Pardon me my momentary hesitation; but you know Paris, do you not? Paris is full of snares and deceptions."

"You, then, took us for — Come, be frank."

"Monsieur took us for snares, that is all."

"Oh, ladies!" said the young man, quite humiliated, "I assure you, no such thought entered my mind."

"But what is the matter? The coach stops."

"I will see, Madame."

"Oh! I think we are overturning; take care, Monsieur!"

And the hand of the younger lady, suddenly extended, fell on the young man's shoulder. The pressure of the hand thrilled him, and by a movement quite natural, he tried to take hold of it; but Andrée, who had yielded to a momentary impulse of fear, had already thrown herself back again in the carriage. He therefore got out and found the coachman engaged in raising one of his horses, which had fallen on the ice.

The horse, with his aid, was soon on its legs again, and they pursued their way. It seemed, however, that this little interruption had destroyed the intimacy which had begun to spring up, for after the ladies had asked and been told the cause of their detention, silence again fell upon the trio of travellers.

The officer, moved by the touch of that warm and palpitating hand, wished at least to have a foot as a substitute; he therefore extended his leg, but with all his skill he encountered nothing, or rather he had the mortification of perceiving that what he touched was withdrawn from him. Once when he had barely grazed the foot of the elder lady, she said to him, with the greatest coolness, "Pardon me, Monsieur, I am very much in your way, am I not?"

He colored up to the ears, and felt thankful to the darkness, which hid his blushes. After this he desisted, and remained perfectly still, as if he were in a church, fearing even to breathe, and shrinking back into the corner of the carriage. But by degrees, and in spite of himself, a strange impression invaded his thought, his whole being. He felt the presence of the two charming women without

touching them; he saw them without looking at them. Gradually becoming accustomed to their proximity, it seemed to him that a portion of their existence had united with his. He would have given the world to renew the conversation; which, however, he did not dare to do, for he was afraid of uttering platitudes, — he, who on their departure from Paris even disdained to utter one of the commonplace phrases current in the language of society. He was afraid of appearing simple or impertinent in the eyes of these women, whom but an hour before he thought he was honoring too much by giving them a louis and showing them ordinary politeness.

In a word, as all sympathies in this life are explained by the affinities of fluids brought into contact at the right time, a powerful magnetism, emanating from the perfumes and youthful warmth of those three bodies brought together by chance, controlled the young man, and filled his thoughts while dilating his heart. Thus sometimes the most real, the sweetest, the most ardent passions are born, live, and die in the space of a few moments. They have charm because ephemeral; they have strength because they are restrained.

The officer said not another word. The ladies conversed in whispers.

However, as he was all the time listening, he now and then caught a word to which his imagination lent some sort of meaning. This was what he heard: "The late hour . . . the gates . . . pretext for the journey — "

The carriage stopped again. This time it was not on account of a fallen horse or a broken wheel. After three hours of courageous effort the worthy coachman had succeeded in warming his hands, — that is to say, he had lashed his horses into a foam and had reached Versailles, whose long avenues appeared gloomy and deserted under

the reddish rays of the street-lamps, which, whitened by the frost, looked like a double file of ghosts.

The young man understood that they had reached the end of their journey. By what magic, then, had the time seemed to him so short?

The coachman bent down to the front window. "Master," said he, "we are at Versailles."

"Where do you wish to go, ladies?" asked the officer.

"To the Place d'Armes."

"To the Place d'Armes!" the young man called out to the coachman.

"I must drive to the Place d'Armes?" said the latter.

"Yes, certainly, since you are so directed."

"There will be a little tip for that?" asked the Auvergnese, sniggering.

"Go on."

The cracking of the whip-lash was heard again.

"I must certainly say something," thought the officer. "I shall be taken for an imbecile, after having been considered impertinent."

"Ladies," he said, with some hesitation still, "you have reached home."

"Thanks to your generous aid."

"What trouble we have given you!" said the younger of the two ladies.

"Oh, I have more than forgotten it, Madame."

"Well, Monsieur, we shall not forget. Your name, if you please, Monsieur."

"My name? Oh!"

"It is the second time you have been asked for it. Take care! And you do not mean to bestow a louis upon us, do you?"

"Oh, Madame, if that is it," said the young man, rather piqued, "I yield; I am the Comte de Charny, and as Madame has already remarked, a naval officer."

"Charny," repeated the elder lady, in a tone that meant, "Very good; I shall not forget it."

"Georges, Georges de Charny," the officer added.

"Georges!" the younger lady murmured.

"And you live —"

"Hôtel des Princes, Rue de Richelieu."

The coach stopped. The elder lady opened the door and jumped out quickly, holding out a hand to her companion.

"But at least," said he, preparing to follow them, "take my arm, ladies; you are not yet at your own home, and the Place d'Armes is not a residence."

"Do not stir!" said both ladies, speaking together.

"What! I must not stir?"

"No; remain in the coach."

"You cannot walk alone at this time of night; it is impossible!"

"Now, you see," said the elder lady, gayly, "after almost refusing to oblige us, you wish to be too obliging."

"But, Madame —"

"Monsieur, remain to the end a loyal and gallant cavalier. We thank you, Monsieur de Charny, with all our hearts; and since you are, as I just said, a loyal and gallant cavalier, we will not even ask your word —"

"To do what, Madame?"

"To shut the door, and order the man to drive back to Paris; which you will do, — will you not? — without even looking back at us."

"You are right, ladies, and my word would be useless. Driver, we will return, my friend;" and he put a second louis into the coachman's brawny hand.

The worthy Auvergnese trembled with joy. "*Morbleu!*" said he, "the horses may founder if they choose!"

"To be sure; they are paid for," murmured the officer.

The carriage rolled on, and rapidly. The noise of the wheels covered the young man's sigh, — a voluptuous sigh; for the sybarite had stretched himself on the cushions still warm with the contact of the two lovely, unknown ladies.

As to them, they remained motionless till the carriage was out of sight, and then took their way toward the castle.

CHAPTER VI.

LAURENT.

Just at the moment when the travellers were starting on their way, gusts of wind bore to their ears, from the church of Saint Louis, the striking of a clock.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* a quarter to twelve," they both cried out together.

"See, all the gates are shut," said the younger.

"Oh, that is nothing, dear Andrée; for if they were open, we would not go in here. Come, quick! quick! Let us go by way of the reservoirs." And they turned to the right, where there was a private entrance to the gardens.

When they arrived there, "The door is shut, Andrée," said the elder lady, rather uneasily.

"Let us knock, Madame."

"No, we will call. Laurent must be waiting for me; I told him that perhaps I should return late."

"Well, then, I will call," said Andrée, approaching the door.

"Who is there?" said a voice from inside.

"Oh, that is not Laurent's voice!" said the younger lady, in alarm. "No, indeed!"

The other lady advanced, and called softly, "Laurent!"

No answer.

"Laurent!" again she called, knocking.

"There is no Laurent here," replied the voice, rudely.

"But," said Andrée, peremptorily, "whether you are Laurent or not, open the gate."

"I will not open it."

"But, my friend, you should know that Laurent always opens to us."

"I have nothing to do with Laurent; I have my orders."

"Who are you, then?"

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?" said the voice.

The question was rudely put, but it was no time for ceremony; they must answer.

"We are ladies of her Majesty's suite; we lodge in the castle, and we wish to get home."

"Well, I, mesdames, am a Swiss of the Salischamade company, and I shall do just the opposite of what Laurent would do; for I shall leave you outside the gate."

"Oh!" murmured the ladies, one of whom pressed the hands of the other, with a movement of anger. Then making an effort over herself, she said: "My friend, I understand that you are obeying orders, and I do not quarrel with you for that, — it is a soldier's duty; only, do me the favor to call Laurent. He cannot be far away."

"I must not leave my post."

"Then send some one."

"I have no one to send."

"For pity's sake!"

"Eh, *mordieu!* Madame, sleep in the town. That is no great matter. Oh, if they should shut the door of the barracks in my face I should soon find a sleeping-place, you may be sure."

"Grenadier, listen," said the elder of the two ladies, with resolution; "twenty louis for you if you open."

"And ten years in irons. No, I thank you; forty-eight francs a year are not enough for that."

"I will have you appointed sergeant."

"Yes; and he who gave me the order will have me shot. I thank you!"

"Who, then, gave you the order?"

"The king."

"The king!" both ladies exclaimed, with terror; "oh, we are lost!" The younger lady seemed almost distracted.

"Let us see, let us see," said the elder, "is there no other gate?"

"Oh, Madame! if they have closed this one they have closed the others. And if we do not find Laurent here, at his usual post, where do you think we can find him? Oh, no! it has been all arranged."

"It is true. You are right. Andrée, Andrée, this is a frightful trick on the part of the king. Oh! oh!" To these last words the lady gave an accent of scorn and threatening.

This gate of the reservoirs was built so far into the thick wall as to make of the recess a sort of vestibule, and on each side of this vestibule there was a stone-bench. The ladies sank down on one of these benches, in a state of agitation bordering on despair. They could see the light under the gate, and could hear the steps of the sentinel, and the noise he made with his gun as he carried it to his shoulder or rested it on the ground. Beyond that thin obstacle of oak, safety; on the outside shame, scandal, almost death.

"Oh, to-morrow, to-morrow, when all will be discovered!" murmured the elder lady.

"But you will need only to state the truth."

"Will any one believe it?"

"You have proofs. Madame, the soldier will not stay here all night," said the younger lady, who seemed to gain courage in proportion as her companion lost it; "at some

time during the night he will be relieved, and his successor will perhaps be more considerate. Let us wait."

"Yes, but the patrol will come at midnight, and I shall be found waiting outside the gates, — hiding myself. It is infamous! See, Andrée, the blood mounts to my face; I am suffocating!"

"Oh, take courage, Madame! — you who are always so brave. I, just now so weak, I am supporting you."

"There is some plot under all this, Andrée, and we are the victims of it. This never happened before; this gate has never been closed. It will kill me, Andrée; I am dying!" And she threw herself back as if she were really suffocating.

At this moment a step resounded upon the dry, white pavement of Versailles, so little trodden in these days. At the same time the gay and joyous voice of a young man was heard singing one of those songs the affected style of which belongs particularly to the period we are endeavoring to describe.

"That voice!" cried the two ladies, at the same time.

"I recognize it," said the elder.

"It is that of —"

The young man continued his song.

"It is he!" whispered the lady who had been so much agitated, into the ear of Andrée; "it is he! he will save us."

A young man, wrapped up in a fur riding-coat, came quickly up, and without noticing them knocked at the door and called, "Laurent."

"Brother," said the elder lady, touching him on the shoulder.

"The queen!" cried he, starting back and taking off his hat.

"Hush! Good-evening, brother."

"Good-evening, Madame; good-evening, sister. You are not alone?"

"No; I am with Mademoiselle de Taverney."

"Ah! Good-evening, Mademoiselle."

"Monseigneur," murmured Andrée.

"Are you going out, ladies?" he asked.

"No."

"Then you are going in?"

"We would go in if we could."

"Have you not called Laurent?"

"Certainly we have."

"Well?"

"Just call Laurent and you will see."

The young man, whom the reader has perhaps already recognized as the Comte d'Artois, approached and again called, "Laurent," at the same time knocking on the door.

"Good! the play begins again. I warn you," answered the voice of the guard from within, "that if you trouble me any more, I will go and call my commanding officer."

"Who is this?" asked the count, turning round in astonishment to the queen.

"A guard who has been substituted for Laurent, that is all."

"By whom?"

"By the king."

"The king?"

"Certainly, the man told us so himself."

"And with special instructions?"

"Most strict, apparently."

"*Diable!* we must capitulate."

"How can we?"

"We will give the fellow some money."

"I have already offered it, and he has refused to take it."

"Offer him promotion."

"I have offered that also, but he would not listen."

"Then there is but one way."

"What?"

"I must make a noise."

"You will compromise us; my dear Charles, I entreat you!"

"Not the least in the world; you keep in the background. I will knock like a deaf man, I will cry out like a blind man; they will open at last, and you can slip in after me."

"Try, then."

The young prince began calling Laurent, knocking at the door and striking with his sword, until at last the guard cried out in a rage, "Ah, well! if you are going to carry on like that, I will call my officer."

"Eh, *pardieu!* call, you rascal, that is just what I want."

They soon heard other steps approaching on the other side of the door. The queen and Andrée kept close behind the Comte d'Artois, ready to slip in if the door should open; then they heard the guard explain the cause of the noise. "Lieutenant," he said, "there are some ladies with a gentleman who has just called me a rascal. They insist on entering."

"Well, as we belong to the palace," said the count, "what is there surprising in that?"

"It is no doubt a natural wish, Monsieur, but it is forbidden," replied the officer.

"Forbidden! by whom? *morbleu!*"

"By the king."

"I beg pardon; but the king would not wish an officer of the palace to sleep outside."

"Monsieur, it is not for me to scrutinize the intentions of the king; I must obey his orders, that is all."

"Come, Lieutenant, open the door; we cannot talk through this oak."

"Monsieur, I repeat to you that my orders are to keep it shut; and if you are an officer, as you say you are, you ought to know what an order is."

"Lieutenant, you are speaking to the colonel of a regiment."

"Excuse me then, Colonel, but my order is a formal one."

"But they cannot concern a prince. Come, Monsieur, a prince cannot sleep outside, and I am a prince."

"My prince, I am in despair; but the king has ordered —"

"The king has ordered you to turn away his brother like a beggar or a robber? I am the Comte d'Artois, Monsieur. *Mordieu!* you run a great risk by keeping me freezing at the gate."

"Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois," said the lieutenant, "God is my witness that I would shed every drop of my blood for your Royal Highness; but the king did me the honor to tell me, when he confided to me the care of this gate, to open it to no one, not even to himself, the king, if he presented himself after eleven o'clock. Therefore, Monseigneur, I ask your pardon humbly; but I am a soldier, and if, instead of you, I should see behind this gate her Majesty the queen benumbed with cold, I should answer her Majesty as I have just had the pain of answering you."

Having said this, the officer, after respectfully bidding the prince good-night, turned away, and went back to his post.

As for the soldier who was standing against the gate itself, he did not dare to breathe, and his heart beat so violently that the Comte d'Artois, by putting his back against the gate, might have felt the pulsations.

"We are lost!" said the queen.

"Do they know that you are out?" asked the count.

"Alas! I know not."

"Perhaps, then, this order is directed against me; the king knows I often go out at night, and stay late. Madame la Comtesse d'Artois must have heard something, and complained to him; hence this tyrannical order."

"Ah, no, brother! I thank you with all my heart for the delicacy with which you try to reassure me; but I feel that it is against me that these precautions are taken."

"Impossible, sister! the king has too much esteem —"

"Meanwhile, I am left at the door; and to-morrow a frightful scandal will be the result of a most innocent affair. I know well I have an enemy near the king."

"It may be so; however, I have an idea."

"An idea? tell it quickly."

"An idea which will make your enemy look more stupid than an ass hung by his own halter."

"Oh, if you can but save us from the ridicule of this position, it is all I ask!"

"If I can save you! of course I can. Oh, I am not more foolish than he, although he is more learned than I!"

"Than who?"

"Ah, *pardieu!* the Comte de Provence."

"Ah, then, you also see that he is my enemy!"

"Is he not the enemy of all who are young and beautiful, of all who can do — what he is not able to do?"

"Count, I believe you know something about this order!"

"Perhaps; but do not let us stop here, or we shall perish with the cold. Come with me, dear sister."

"Where?"

"You shall see; to some place where at least you will be warm. Come, and on the way I will tell you what I know about this closing of the gate. Ah, Monsieur de Provence, my dear and unworthy brother! Take my arm, sister, and you the other, Mademoiselle de Taverney, and let us turn to the right;" and they began their walk.

"You were saying of Monsieur de Provence —" said the queen.

"Well, this evening, after the king's supper, he came into the grand cabinet. He had been talking all day to the Comte de Haga, and you had not been seen —"

"At two o'clock I left to go to Paris."

"I knew that well. The king, allow me to tell you, dear sister, was thinking no more of you than of Haroun-al-Raschid, or his Vizier Giaffar, and was talking geography. I listened with some impatience, for I also wanted to go out. Ah, pardon me! we probably did not go out for the same purpose; so that I am wrong —"

"Go on; say what you please."

"Let us turn to the left."

"Where are we going?"

"Oh, close by; take care, there is a heap of snow! Mademoiselle de Taverney, if you leave my arm you will certainly fall! But to return to the king; he was thinking of nothing but latitude and longitude, when Monsieur de Provence said to him, 'I should like to pay my respects to the queen.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Marie Antoinette.

"'The queen has supper in her own apartments,' replied the king. 'Oh, I thought she was at Paris,' added my brother. 'No, she is in her apartments,' said the king, quietly. 'I have just come from there, and been denied to her,' said Monsieur de Provence. Then I saw the king frown. He dismissed my brother and me, and doubtless

went to make inquiries. Louis is jealous by fits, you know; he must have asked to see you, and when they refused him admission he suspected something."

"Yes; Madame de Misery had orders to do so."

"That is it; and to assure himself of your absence, the king has given that strict order which turns us out of doors."

"Oh, it is shameful treatment. Confess, is it not?"

"Indeed, I think so; but here we are."

"This house?"

"Does it displease you, sister?"

"Oh, I do not say that, — it is charming, on the contrary. But your servants?"

"Well!"

"Should they see me."

"Come in, sister, and I will guarantee that no one sees you."

"Not even the one who will open the door?"

"Not even that one."

"Impossible!"

"We will try," said he, laughing. And he stretched out his hand to the door.

The queen caught his arm. "I beg you, brother, take care."

The prince pressed with his other hand upon an elegantly sculptured panel. The door opened.

The queen could not repress a movement of fear.

"Enter, I pray you," said he; "there is no one near."

The queen looked at Andrée with the expression of one who faces a danger; then she crossed the threshold, with one of those gestures so charming among women, and whose meaning was, "God have mercy!" And the door closed after them.

She found herself in a stuccoed vestibule with marble columns, small, but in perfect taste. The floor was of

mosaic work, representing bouquets of flowers, while numerous rose-trees on marble brackets scented the air with a perfume as delicious as at that time of the year it was rare.

A gentle heat and delicate odors so captivated the senses that when they reached the vestibule, the two ladies forgot not only a portion of their fears but also a portion of their scruples.

"So far well; we are under shelter," said the queen; "and it must be confessed the shelter is quite commodious. But there is one thing, brother, you had better attend to at once."

"What is that?"

"The removal of your servants."

"Oh! nothing easier." And the prince, seizing a bell-pull placed in the fluting of a column, a single stroke was immediately heard, which vibrated mysteriously through the lower part of the house.

The two ladies uttered a cry of terror.

"Is that the way in which you send away your servants, brother?" asked the queen. "On the contrary I should think that you were calling them."

"If I should ring a second time, yes, some one would come; but as I touched the bell only once, be easy, sister, no one will come."

The queen began to laugh.

"Well, you are a man of precaution," said she.

"Now, dear sister," continued the prince, "you cannot live in a vestibule; will you take the trouble to walk up stairs?"

"We obey," said the queen; "the genius of the house does not seem very malevolent." And she followed the prince upstairs.

Their steps could not be heard on the Aubusson carpet

which covered the stairs. Having reached the first story the prince touched another bell, the sound of which again startled the queen and Mademoiselle de Taverney, who were taken by surprise. But they were doubly astonished when they saw the doors of this story open of their own accord.

"Really, Andrée," said the queen, "I am beginning to tremble; how is it with you?"

"Oh, Madame, I shall follow fearlessly wherever your Majesty goes."

"Nothing can be more simple, sister, than that which is happening," said the young prince; "the door opposite you is the door of your apartment. See." And he pointed out to the queen a charming apartment of which we cannot avoid giving a description.

A little antechamber finished in rosewood, with two dressing-tables by Boule, ceiling painted by Boucher, and a floor of rosewood, led to a boudoir hung with white cashmere embroidered in flowers by the most skilful artists. The furniture of this boudoir was a tapestry worked in silk, and shaded with that art which rendered a Gobelins tapestry of that period equivalent to a picture by a master. Beyond the boudoir was a beautiful bedchamber in blue, hung with curtains of lace and silk, a sumptuous bed in a dark alcove, a bright fire in the fire-place of white marble, twelve perfumed candles burning in the candelabra of Clodion, a screen of blue lacquer with Chinese figures in gold, — such were the marvels which met the eyes of the ladies as they timidly entered this elegant apartment.

Not a living being was to be seen; everywhere warmth, light, without their being able to discover the causes of such delightful effects.

The queen, who had entered the boudoir with reserve, now paused a moment on the threshold of the bedchamber.

The prince apologized in a very polite manner for the necessity which required him to confide to his sister a secret unworthy of her.

The queen replied by a half-smile, which expressed more than any words she could have spoken.

"Sister," added the Comte d'Artois, "this apartment is my bachelor home; I alone enter here, and I always enter alone."

"Almost always," said the queen.

"No, always."

"Ah!" said the queen.

"Moreover," he continued, "there are in this boudoir a sofa and an easy-chair upon which many times, when night overtakes me at the chase, I have slept as well as in my bed."

"I understand now," said the queen, "why Madame la Comtesse is sometimes uneasy."

"Confess, however, that if she is uneasy about me to-night, it will be without reason."

"Of to-night I say nothing, but other nights —"

"He who is wrong once is always wrong."

"Let us stop talking," said the queen, sitting down in an easy-chair. "I am very tired," she said, "are not you, Andrée?"

"Oh! I can scarcely stand, and if your Majesty permits —"

"Indeed, you look pale, Mademoiselle," said the count.

"Do not stand on ceremony, my dear," said the queen; "sit down, or even go to bed. Monsieur le Comte gives us up this room, — do you not, Charles?"

"For your exclusive use, Madame."

"One moment, Count. If you go away, how can we recall you?"

"You will not need me, sister; once established, you are mistress of this house."

"But there are other rooms?"

"Certainly, there is a dining-room which I advise you to visit."

"With a table ready spread, doubtless."

"Why, certainly; and Mademoiselle de Taverney, who seems to me to need it much, will find there soup, the wing of a chicken, and a glass of wine, — and you, my sister, a collection of those preserved fruits you like so much."

"And all this without servants?"

"Not one."

"We will see; but afterwards?"

"Well?"

"Why, our return to the palace."

"You must not think of returning to-night. At six o'clock the gates will be opened, and you must leave here at a quarter before six. You will find in these drawers mantles of all colors and all shapes, if you wish to disguise yourselves. Return, then, to the palace, regain your rooms, go to bed, and all will be right."

"But you, what will you do?"

"Oh, I am going away."

"What! we turn you out, my poor brother?"

"It would not be proper for me to remain in the same house with you, sister."

"But you must sleep somewhere."

"Do not fear; I have three other houses like this."

The queen laughed. "And he pretends Madame la Comtesse has no cause to be anxious! Oh, I will tell her," said she, with a charming gesture.

"Then I will tell the king everything," replied the prince, in the same tone.

"He is right, we are in his power."

"Entirely. It is humiliating; but what can you do?"

"Submit. So you say that in order to go away to-morrow morning without seeing any one —"

"A single pull at the bell-cord on the column below —"

"On which, — the one on the right hand or on the left?"

"It makes no difference."

"The door will open?"

"And will close again."

"Of itself?"

"Of itself."

"Thanks. Good-night, brother."

"Good-night, sister." He bowed and disappeared, Andrée closing the door after him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER.

THE next day, or rather the same morning, for our last chapter brought us to two o'clock, King Louis XVI., in a violet-colored morning dress, wearing no orders, and with no powder in his hair, knocked at the door of the queen's antechamber.

A waiting-woman partly opened the door, and recognizing the king, "Sire!" said she.

"The queen?" asked Louis XVI., in a brusque manner.

"Her Majesty is asleep, Sire."

The king made a sign to the woman to move, but she did not stir.

"Well!" cried the king, "will you move? You see very well that I wish to pass."

The king had at times a promptness of action which his enemies called brutality.

"But the queen is asleep, Sire," objected the woman, timidly.

"I told you to let me pass," answered the king, going in as he spoke.

When he reached the door of the bedroom the king saw Madame de Misery, first lady-in-waiting to the queen, reading in her prayer-book.

This lady rose on perceiving the king. "Sire," she said, in a low voice and with a profound reverence, "her Majesty has not yet called me."

"Really!" said the king, in a mocking tone.

"But, Sire, it is only half-past six o'clock, and her Majesty never rings before seven."

"And you are sure that her Majesty is asleep in bed?"

"I cannot affirm that she is asleep, Sire, but I am certain that she is in bed."

"She is there, then?"

"Yes, Sire."

The king could contain himself no longer, but went straight to the door, and turned the gilded door-knob with obstreperous haste.

The queen's chamber was as dark as in the middle of the night; shutters, blinds, and curtains, hermetically closed, shut out the light of day. A night-lamp, burning on a small table in the most remote corner of the room, left the queen's alcove in shadow, where the large white silk curtains embroidered with *fleurs de lis* in gold, fell in waving folds around her.

The king walked rapidly toward the bed.

"Oh, Madame de Misery!" said the queen, "how noisy you are! You have awakened me!"

The king stopped, astounded.

"It is not Madame de Misery," he murmured.

"Ah, it is you, Sire!" added Marie Antoinette, raising herself on one elbow.

"Good morning, Madame," said the king, rather sharply.

"What good wind brings you, Sire?" asked the queen. "Madame de Misery! Madame de Misery! come and open the windows."

The women came in, and in accordance with the custom the queen had made them adopt, they opened both doors and windows to admit the fresh air, which Marie Antoinette took pleasure in breathing on first awaking.

"You sleep well, Madame," said the king, sitting down near the bed, after casting scrutinizing glances round the room.

"Yes, Sire; I read late, and consequently, if your Majesty had not awakened me, I should be asleep still."

"How was it that you did not receive yesterday, Madame?"

"Receive, and whom, — your brother, Monsieur de Provence?" said the queen, with presence of mind, anticipating the suspicions of the king.

"Precisely, — yes, my brother; he wished to pay his respects to you, and was refused."

"Well?"

"They told him you were away."

"Did they say that?" asked the queen, carelessly. "Madame de Misery! Madame de Misery!"

The first lady-in-waiting appeared at the door, bringing on a golden salver a number of letters addressed to the queen. "Did your Majesty call me?" asked Madame de Misery.

"Yes. Was Monsieur de Provence told yesterday that I was away from the palace?"

Madame de Misery, in order not to pass before the king, went behind him, and held out the salver on which were the letters to the queen. She kept under her thumb one of these letters, the hand-writing of which the queen recognized.

"Tell his Majesty," continued Marie Antoinette, with the same indifferent manner, "what reply was given Monsieur de Provence yesterday when he presented himself at my door. I do not remember myself what it was."

"Sire," said Madame de Misery, while the queen was opening the letter, "Monseigneur le Comte de Provence

called yesterday to pay his respects to her Majesty, and I told him that her Majesty was not receiving."

"And by whose order?"

"By order of the queen."

"Ah!" said the king.

Meantime the queen had opened the letter, and read these two lines: "You returned from Paris yesterday, and entered the palace at eight o'clock in the evening. Laurent saw you."

With the same air of indifference the queen had opened a half-dozen notes, letters, and petitions, which were scattered over the quilt of eider-down. "Well?" she said, turning to look at the king.

"I thank you, Madame," said the latter to Madame de Misery, who withdrew from the room.

"Pardon, Sire!" said the queen, "but will you answer me one question?"

"And what is that, Madame?"

"Am I, or am I not, at liberty to see Monsieur de Provence only when it pleases me?"

"Oh, perfectly at liberty, Madame; but —"

"Well, his conversation wearies me; besides, he dislikes me, and I certainly return the compliment. I expected his visit, and went to bed at eight o'clock to avoid it. But you look disturbed, Sire."

"Nothing, nothing!"

"One would imagine that you doubted."

"But —"

"But what?"

"I believed you to be in Paris, yesterday."

"At what time."

"At the time at which you pretend to have gone to bed."

"Doubtless, I went to Paris. Well, do not people return from Paris?"

"Of course. But all, Madame, depends on what time they return."

"Ah, ah! you wish to know at what time exactly I returned from Paris, then?"

"Why, yes."

"Nothing can be more easy, Sire. Madame de Misery!"

The lady reappeared.

"What time was it when I returned from Paris yesterday?" asked the queen.

"About eight o'clock, your Majesty."

"I do not believe it!" said the king; "you are mistaken, Madame de Misery. Inquire."

The lady-in-waiting, erect and unmoved, turned toward the door, "Madame Duval!" said she.

"Yes, Madame," replied a voice.

"At what time did her Majesty return from Paris yesterday?"

"About eight o'clock, Madame," replied the second lady-in-waiting.

"You must be mistaken, Madame Duval," said Madame de Misery.

Madame Duval put her head out of the window of the antechamber and cried, "Laurent!"

"Who is Laurent?" asked the king.

"The porter at the gate where her Majesty entered," said Madame de Misery.

"Laurent," said Madame Duval, "what time was it when her Majesty came home last evening?"

"About eight o'clock," answered Laurent, from the terrace below.

The king bent his head.

Madame de Misery dismissed Madame Duval, who dismissed Laurent.

The king and queen were left alone.

Louis XVI. felt very much ashamed, and was making every effort to conceal this feeling.

But the queen, instead of triumphing over the victory she had just won, said coldly, "Well, Sire, is there anything else you wish to know?"

"Oh, nothing," cried he, taking her hand in his, "forgive me; I do not know what came into my head. See my joy; it is as great as my repentance. You will not be angry, will you? I am in despair at having annoyed you."

The queen withdrew her hand from that of the king.

"Well! what are you doing, Madame?" asked Louis.

"Sire, a queen of France must not tell a falsehood."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished king.

"I mean that I did not return at eight o'clock last evening."

The king drew back in surprise.

"I mean," continued the queen, in the same cold manner, "that I returned only at six o'clock this morning."

"Madame!"

"And that but for the kindness of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, who gave me an asylum, and lodged me, out of pity, in one of his houses, I should have been left all night at the gate of the palace like a beggar."

"Ah, you had not then returned!" said the king, gloomily; "then I was right."

"I beg your pardon, Sire; but you are drawing from what I have just said an arithmetical conclusion, not the conclusion of a gentleman."

"In what, Madame?"

"In this,—that if you wish to know whether I return late or early, you have no need to close the gates, with orders not to open them, but simply to come to me and ask, 'Madame, at what time did you return?'"

"Oh!" cried the king.

"You are no longer permitted to doubt, Monsieur. Your spies have been deceived, your precautions nullified, and your suspicions dissipated. I saw you ashamed of having used violence toward a woman in the exercise of her right, and I might have continued to triumph in my victory; but I think your proceedings shameful for a king, and unworthy of a gentleman, and I would not refuse myself the satisfaction of telling you so.

"Oh, do what you will, Sire," she continued, seeing the king about to speak; "nothing can excuse your conduct toward me."

"On the contrary, Madame," he replied, "nothing is more easy. Not a single person in the chateau suspected that you had not already returned; therefore no one could think that my orders referred to you. That they may have been attributed to the dissipations of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois — for that I care nothing."

"Go on, Sire."

"Well, then, I recapitulate, and I say: If I have been careful of appearances with regard to you, Madame, I am right, and I tell you that you are wrong in not having done the same with regard to me; and if I wished simply to give you a private lesson, if you profit by this lesson as you will, to judge from your irritation, — well, I am still right, and I am not sorry for what I have done."

The queen had listened to the reply of her august husband, by degrees becoming calm; not that she was the less irritated, but she wished to reserve all her strength for the struggle which, in her opinion, instead of being finished had scarcely begun.

"Then, Sire," she said, "you think you need no excuse for keeping outside your palace-gate the daughter of Maria Theresa, your wife and the mother of your children? No!

it is in your eyes a pleasantry worthy of a king, the morality of which doubles its value. It is nothing to you, to have forced the queen of France to pass the night in a house where the Comte d'Artois receives the ladies of the Opera and the adventurous women of your court. Oh, no; that is nothing! A king — a philosopher-king, especially — is above all such considerations. And you are a philosopher, — you, Sire. But on this occasion I have reason to thank Heaven that my brother-in-law is a dissipated man, as his dissipation has saved me from disgrace, and his vices have sheltered my honor."

The king colored and moved uneasily on his chair.

"Oh, yes!" continued the queen, with a bitter laugh, "I know that you are a moral king; but your morality produces strange effects. You say that no one knew that I was out. Will you tell me that Monsieur de Provence, your instigator, did not know it, or Monsieur le Comte d'Artois; or my women, who, by my orders, told you falsehoods this morning; or Laurent, — bought by Monsieur d'Artois and myself? Let us continue this habit, Sire, — you, to set spies and guards; and I, to buy them over, and cheat you, — and in a month we will calculate together how much the dignity of the throne and of our marriage has gained by it."

It was evident that these words had made a great impression on him to whom they were addressed.

"You know," said the king, in an altered voice, "that I am always sincere, and willing to acknowledge if I have been wrong. Will you prove to me that you were right to go into Paris in a sledge attended by a gay party of gentlemen, which in the present unhappy state of things is likely to give offence? Will you prove to me that you were right to disappear with them in Paris, like maskers at a ball, and only to reappear scandalously late at night,

when every one else was asleep? You have spoken of the dignity of the throne, and of marriage, and of your position as a mother; think you that it befits a queen, a wife, and a mother, to act thus?"

"I will reply in a few words, Sire; for it seems to me that such accusations merit nothing but contempt. I left Versailles in a sledge, because it is the quickest way of going to Paris at present. I went with Mademoiselle de Taverney, whose reputation, thank God! is certainly one of the purest in our court. I went to Paris, I repeat, to verify the fact that the king of France, — that father of the great family, that royal philosopher, that moral support of all consciences, who takes care of the poor, warms the beggars, and earns the gratitude of the people by his charities, — that the king leaves dying of hunger, exposed to every attack of vice and misery, one of his own family, one who is as much as himself a descendant of the kings who have reigned in France."

"What!" cried the king, in surprise.

"I mounted," continued the queen, "into a garret, and there saw, without fire, almost without light, and without money, the granddaughter of a great prince; and I gave one hundred louis to this victim of royal forgetfulness and neglect. Then as I was detained late there, reflecting on the vanity of all our grandeurs, — for I also am a philosopher sometimes, — and as the cold was severe, and horses go slowly over ice, particularly the horses of a fiacre —"

"The horses of a fiacre!" cried the king. "You returned in a fiacre?"

"Yes, Sire, — in number one hundred and seven."

"Oh, oh!" said the king, with every sign of vexation.

"Yes, and only too happy to get it," said the queen.

"Madame!" interrupted the king, "you have done

well; you always have noble impulses, — too easily excited, perhaps, but the fault belongs to the warmth of generosity for which you are distinguished."

"Thank you, Sire," said the queen, ironically.

"Observe," continued the king, "I never suspected you of anything that was not perfectly pure and honest; it is the expedition itself and the queen's adventurous spirit which annoy me. You have, as usual, been doing good; but the way you set about it makes it injurious to yourself. This is what I reproach you with. You say that I have faults to repair, — that I have failed in my duty to a member of my own family. Tell me who the unfortunate is, and he shall no longer have reason to complain."

"The name of Valois, Sire, is sufficiently illustrious, I should imagine, not to have escaped your memory."

"Ah!" cried Louis, with a shout of laughter, "I know now whom you mean. The little Valois, is it not? — a countess of something or other."

"De La Motte, Sire."

"Precisely, De La Motte;" said the king, "her husband is a gendarme?"

"Yes, Sire."

"And the woman is an intriguer? Oh, don't get angry. She moves heaven and earth; she worries my ministers; she teases my aunts; she overwhelms me with supplications, memorials, and genealogies."

"Eh, Sire! that proves that until now she has applied in vain."

"I do not deny it."

"Is she, or is she not, a Valois?"

"Oh, I believe she is, really."

"Well, then, I ask an honorable pension for her, and a regiment for her husband, — in short, a decent position for this branch of a royal family."

"Oh, gently, Madame. *Diable!* how fast you get on! The little Valois is well able to pluck feathers from me without your help. She has a good beak, I can tell you."

"Oh, I have no fear for you, Sire; your feathers are hard to pluck!"

"An honorable pension? *Mon Dieu!* what are you thinking of, Madame? Do you know what a terrible hole this winter has made in my funds? A regiment for this little gendarme who speculated in marrying a Valois? Why, I have no regiments to give, even to those who deserve them, or who can pay for them. An income befitting a Valois for these people? — when we, monarchs as we are, have not one befitting a rich gentleman! Why, Monsieur d'Orléans has sent his horses and mules to England for sale, and has cut off a third of his establishment. I have put down my wolf-hounds, and given up many things. We are all on the privation list, — great and small, my dear."

"But, nevertheless, Sire, these Valois must not die of hunger!"

"Have you not just given them one hundred louis?"

"And what is that?"

"A royal gift."

"Then give another like it."

"I shall be very careful not to; what you have given is enough for both of us."

"Then a small pension."

"No, I will not bind myself to anything fixed; they will not let us forget them, — they belong to the rodent species. I will give when I have money to spare, but without committing myself to anything for the future. I do not think much of this little Valois."

Saying these words, Louis held out his hand to the

queen, who, yielding to her first impulse, began raising it to her lips. Then suddenly pushing it away, "No," she said.

"You bear malice against me?" said the king, — "you? Well, I on the contrary — "

"Oh, yes; say that you are not angry with me, — you, who order the gates of Versailles to be closed against me! you, who come to my room at half-past six in the morning, and force open the door in a passion, furiously rolling your eyes."

The king laughed. "No," said he; "I am not angry with you."

"You are not now, you mean."

"What will you give me if I prove that I was not, even when I came in?"

"Let me see the proof, in the first place."

"Oh, it is very easy; I have it in my pocket."

"Bah!" said the queen, — but curious, nevertheless. She sat up on the bed. "You have brought something to give me? Oh, really! you are, then, very kind. But I warn you I shall not believe you, unless you show it to me at once. Oh, no subterfuge. I will wager that you are about to give me another promise."

Then with a smile full of kindness, the king began searching in his pockets, with that slowness which makes the child doubly impatient for his toy, the animal for his food, and the woman for her present. At last he drew out a box of red-morocco leather, artistically ornamented with gold.

"A casket!" cried the queen.

The king laid it on the bed. The queen eagerly pounced upon it, and drew it toward her. She opened the casket, and intoxicated, dazzled by the sight, she exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful it is! *mon Dieu!* how beautiful it is!"

The king smiled with delight. "Do you think so?" said he.

The queen could not answer; she was breathless with admiration. Then she drew out of the box a necklace of diamonds so large, so pure, so glittering, and so skilfully assorted that it seemed to her as if a stream of phosphoric flame glided over her beautiful hands. The necklace undulated like the rings of a serpent, emitting flashes of light from every scale.

"Then you are pleased?" said the king.

"Enchanted, Sire! You make me too happy."

"Really?"

"See this first row; the diamonds are as large as filberts, and so equal in size you could not tell one from another. Then how beautifully the gradation of the rows is managed! The jeweller who made this necklace is an artist."

"They are two."

"Then I wager it is Boehmer and Bossange."

"You have guessed right."

"Indeed, no one but they would risk making such a thing. How beautiful it is, Sire! how beautiful it is!"

"Madame, take care," said the king, "you are paying too much for this necklace!"

"Oh, Sire!" cried the queen, — all the delight fading from her countenance.

That change came so quickly, and was effaced so suddenly, that the king did not have time to notice it. "Come," said he, "grant me a pleasure."

"What is it?"

"That of putting this necklace around your neck."

The queen stopped him, saying, in a tone of sadness, "But, Sire, it is very costly, is it not?"

"Faith, yes!" said the king, laughing. "I have just

told you that you were paying for it more than it is worth; and it will attain to its full value only when in its place,—that is, around your neck."

In saying these words Louis approached the queen, holding in his hands the two ends of the magnificent necklace, to fasten it by the clasp, which was made of a large diamond.

"No, no!" said the queen, "let us not be childish. Put the necklace in your casket, Sire."

"You refuse, then, to allow me to be the first to see it on you?"

"God forbid that I should refuse you that pleasure, Sire, if I were to take the necklace; but—"

"But—" said the king, surprised.

"Neither you, nor any one else, shall see a necklace of this price round my neck."

"You will not wear it?"

"Never!"

"You refuse me?"

"I refuse to wear a million, or a million and a half, of francs around my neck; for this necklace cost fifteen hundred thousand francs, did it not?"

"I do not say it did not," said the king.

"Then I refuse to wear around my neck a million and a half when the king's coffers are empty, when he is forced to stint his charities, and to say to the poor, 'God help you! for I have no more to give.'"

"Are you serious in saying this?"

"Listen, Sire! Monsieur de Sartines told me a short time since that with that sum we could build a ship of the line; and in truth, Sire, the king of France has more need of a ship of the line than the queen of France has need of a necklace."

"Oh!" cried the king, joyfully, and with his eyes full

of tears, "what you have just done is sublime! Thanks, thanks, thanks, Antoinette! you are a good woman;" and to worthily crown this cordial and commonplace demonstration, the good king threw his arms round her neck and kissed her. "Oh, how France will bless you!" he continued, "when it shall hear what you have said."

The queen sighed.

"You regret," said he; "it is not too late."

"No, Sire; it was a sigh of relief. Shut this case, and return it to the jewellers."

"But listen, first; I have arranged the terms of payment, and I have the money. Come, now, what shall I do with it? Do not be so disinterested, Madame."

"No; I have decided. I will not have the necklace; but I want something else."

"*Diable!* then my sixteen hundred thousand francs are gone, after all."

"Sixteen hundred thousand francs! See, now, was it really so costly as that?"

"Faith, Madame! I let the word slip, but I will not take it back."

"Reassure yourself; what I ask is much less costly."

"What do you wish for?"

"That you will permit me to go again to Paris."

"Oh, that is easy enough, and not costly."

"But wait —"

"*Diable!*"

"To Paris, to the Place Vendôme."

"Oh, the deuce!"

"To the house of Monsieur Mesmer."

The king scratched his ear. "Well, as you have denied yourself a trifle of sixteen hundred thousand francs, I suppose I must let you go, — but on one condition."

"What is it?"

"You must be accompanied by a princess of the blood."

The queen reflected. "Shall it be Madame de Lamballe?" said she.

"Yes, if you like."

"It is agreed."

"Then I consent."

"Thanks, Sire."

"And now," said the king, "I shall order my ship of the line, and call it 'The Queen's Necklace.' You shall stand godmother, and then I will send it out to Lapeyrouse;" and kissing his wife's hand, he went away very happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUEEN'S MORNING HOUR.

No sooner was the king gone than the queen rose and went to the window to breathe the pure and frosty morning air. The day advanced, brilliant and full of that charm which the coming of spring imparts to certain days in April. To the frost of the night had succeeded the pleasing warmth of the sun, already to be felt. The wind had gone round to the east during the night, and if it remained in that quarter this terrible winter of the year 1784 was at an end. Already, in fact, could be seen on the rosy horizon that grayish vapor which is only moisture fleeing before the sun. In the gardens the frost was falling from the branches, and the little birds began to light upon the buds.

"If we wish to profit by the ice," cried the queen, "I believe we must make haste; for look, Madame de Misery, the spring seems to have begun."

"Your Majesty has long purposed to make up a party for the Swiss Lake."

"Very well, this very day we will make that party, for to-morrow it may be too late."

"Then at what hour will your Majesty wish to dress?"

"Immediately; I will take a light breakfast and then go."

"Are there any other orders, Madame?"

"See if Mademoiselle de Taverney has risen, and tell her I wish to speak to her."

"She is already waiting for you in the boudoir, Madame."

"Already?" said the queen, who knew at what time Andrée had gone to bed.

"She has been there more than twenty minutes, Madame."

"Ask her to come in."

Andrée entered as the clock was striking nine. She was dressed with care, as was required of every lady of the court in presence of her sovereign, and presented herself smiling, though somewhat anxious.

The queen's answering smile quite reassured her.

"Go, my good Misery," said the queen, "and send me Léonard and my tailor."

When the door had closed behind Madame de Misery, the queen said to Andrée, "The king has been charming; he has laughed, and is quite disarmed."

"But does he know, Madame?"

"You understand, Andrée, that a woman does not tell falsehoods when she has done no wrong and is the queen of France."

"Certainly, Madame."

"Still, my dear Andrée, it seems we have committed an error."

"An error, Madame? Oh, more than one, no doubt!"

"Possibly; but this is the first, — the error of pitying Madame de La Motte; the king dislikes her, but I confess she pleased me."

"Oh, your Majesty is too good a judge for me not to agree with you."

"Here is Léonard," said Madame de Misery, returning.

The queen seated herself before her silver-gilt toilet-

table, and the celebrated hairdresser began his operations. She had the most beautiful hair in the world, and was especially pleased with those who admired it. Léonard knew this, and therefore with her was always slow in his movements, that she might have time to look at herself.

That morning Marie Antoinette was pleased, even happy, and was more beautiful than usual. Her hair finished, she turned again to Andrée. "You have not been scolded," she said; "you are free and proud, — you, of whom every one is a little afraid, because, like Minerva, you are too wise."

"I, Madame?" stammered Andrée.

"Yes, you, the kill-joy of the court; but oh, *mon Dieu!* how happy you are to be unmarried, and especially in being contented that you are so."

Andrée blushed and tried to smile. "It is a vow that I have made," said she.

"And which you will keep, my beautiful vestal?"

"I hope so."

"By the way," said the queen, "I remember that although unmarried, you have a master since yesterday morning."

"A master, Madame?"

"Yes, your dear brother; what do you call him? Philippe, is it not?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Has he arrived?"

"He came yesterday, as your Majesty did me the honor to say."

"And have you not yet seen him? I took you away to Paris, — egotist that I was; it was unpardonable."

"Oh, Madame!" said Andrée, smiling, "I pardon you heartily, and so does Philippe."

"Are you sure?"

"I answer for both of us."

"How is he?"

"As usual, beautiful and good, Madame."

"How old is he now?"

"Thirty-two years."

"Poor Philippe! Do you know that it is fourteen years since I first met him? But I have not seen him now for nine or ten."

"Whenever your Majesty pleases to receive him, he will be but too happy to assure you that this long absence has not altered the sentiments of respectful devotion which he has ever felt for his queen."

"Can I see him immediately?"

"In a quarter of an hour he will be at your Majesty's feet."

"Very well, I permit it, — I even wish it."

The queen had hardly finished speaking when some one entered, bounded in a lively manner over the carpet, and placed his face, laughing and mocking, before the same mirror where Marie Antoinette was smiling at her own. "My brother D'Artois!" cried the queen; "how you frightened me!"

"Good-morning, your Majesty!" said the young prince; "how did your Majesty pass the night?"

"Very badly, thank you, brother."

"And the morning?"

"Very well."

"That is the important point. I guessed that all had gone right, for I have just met the king, and he smiled on me most graciously. What a good thing is confidence!"

The queen laughed, and he, knowing no more than she had told him, laughed also, but from a different cause.

"But how thoughtless I am," he said; "I did not even ask Mademoiselle de Taverney how she had passed her time."

The queen was looking in her mirror, and nothing could happen in the room without her seeing it. Léonard having finished his work, she exchanged her dressing-gown of India muslin for a morning-dress.

The door opened.

"Stay!" said the queen to the Comte d'Artois; "if you have anything to say to Andrée, here she is."

Andrée entered at that moment, leading by the hand a handsome man, with a brown complexion, noble black eyes profoundly expressive of melancholy, and a soldier-like carriage. He looked like one of Coypel's or Gainsborough's admirable portraits.

Philippe de Taverney was dressed in a dark-gray coat embroidered in silver, a white cravat, and a dark waistcoat; and this rather sombre style of dress seemed to suit the manly energy expressed in his complexion and his features.

Philippe advanced, one hand in his sister's, the other holding his hat.

"Your Majesty," said Andrée, "here is my brother."

Philippe bowed gravely and deliberately. When he raised his head the queen was still looking in her mirror. It is true that she saw him there as plainly as if she were looking at him face to face.

"Good-day, Monsieur de Taverney!" said the queen; and she turned toward him. She was beautiful, with that royal beauty which made all around her not only partisans of the throne, but adorers of the woman. She possessed the power of beauty; and if we may make use of the inversion, the beauty of power. Philippe, seeing her smile, and feeling those limpid eyes, at once soft and proud,

fixed upon him, turned pale, and could hardly restrain his emotion.

"It appears, Monsieur de Taverney," continued the queen, "that you pay me your first visit. I thank you for it."

"Your Majesty deigns to forget that it is I who should give thanks."

"How many years have passed since we last met, Monsieur! Alas, the most beautiful part of life!"

"For me, Madame; but not for your Majesty, to whom all days are happy days."

"You must have been pleased with America, Monsieur de Taverney, since you remained there after every one else returned."

"Madame," answered Philippe, "Monsieur de Lafayette, when he left the New World, had need of an officer in whom he could place confidence to take command of the French auxiliaries. He proposed me, therefore, to General Washington, who was pleased to accept me."

"It seems," said the queen, "that this New World, of which you speak, sends us home many heroes."

"Your Majesty does not mean that for me?" asked Philippe, laughing.

"Why not?" Then turning to the Comte d'Artois, "See, brother," she said, "has not Monsieur de Taverney a fine bearing and a martial air?"

Philippe seeing himself thus introduced to Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, whom he did not know before, advanced a step toward him, asking of the prince permission to salute him.

The count making a sign with his hand, Philippe bowed.

"A fine officer!" cried the young prince; "a noble gentleman, whose acquaintance I am happy to make. What are your intentions in returning to France?"

Philippe looked at his sister.

"Monsieur," said he, "my sister is my first consideration; whatever she wishes, I shall do."

"But she has a father, I believe?" said the count.

"Never mind him!" said the queen, quickly; "I prefer Andrée under her brother's protection, and he under yours, Count. You will take charge of Monsieur de Taverney, will you not?"

The count bowed an assent.

"For, do you know," continued she, "that very strong ties bind me to Monsieur de Taverney?"

"Very strong ties, — you, sister? Oh, tell me about that!"

"Yes, Monsieur de Taverney was the first Frenchman who presented himself to my eyes when I arrived in this country; and I had made a very sincere vow to promote the happiness of the first Frenchman I should meet."

Philippe felt the blood rush to his face. He bit his lips to control himself, and Andrée looked at him sadly.

The queen observed this interchange of glances between the brother and sister. But what could she know of all the sorrowful secrets concealed in that look, — not being aware of the events narrated in the previous chapters of this history?

She attributed the apparent sorrow which she perceived to another cause. And why was it not probable that Monsieur de Taverney had suffered a little from the epidemic of love for her which had pervaded all France when she was dauphiness, in 1774? There was nothing to render this supposition improbable, not even her reflection in the glass, which still reminded her of the beauty of the young girl, though she was now a wife and queen.

Marie Antoinette, therefore, attributed Philippe's sigh to some confidence of this kind which the brother had

made to the sister; and therefore she smiled still more upon him, and redoubled her kindness toward Andrée. She had not divined everything, neither was she altogether mistaken; and let no one see a shadow of crime in this innocent coquetry. The queen was a true woman, and gloried in being loved. The most generous souls feel the most deeply these aspirations for the love of all who surround them. Alas! a time is coming for thee, poor queen, when those smiles toward those who love thee, with which thou hast been reproached, thou shalt vainly bestow on those who love thee not!

The Comte d'Artois approached Philippe, while the queen consulted Andrée about the trimming for a hunting dress, and said, "Do you think Monsieur de Washington a great general?"

"Certainly a great man, Monseigneur."

"And what effect did the French produce out there?"

"As much good as the English did harm."

"Granted. You are a partisan of the new ideas, my dear Monsieur Philippe de Taverney; but have you reflected on one thing?"

"What, Monseigneur? I assure you that out there, encamped in the fields and in the savannas on the borders of the great lakes, I had plenty of time for reflection on many things."

"On this, — that in making war out there, it was neither against the Indians nor against the English, but against us that you were fighting."

"Ah, Monseigneur, I do not deny that that is possible."

"You admit — "

"I admit the unluckly reaction of an event by which the monarchy was saved."

"Yes; but to those who have survived the first attack of the disease, a reaction might be fatal."

"Alas! Monseigneur."

"Therefore I do not admire so much these victories of Monsieur Washington, and of the Marquis de Lafayette. It is egotism, perhaps, but excuse me, it is not egotism for myself alone."

"Oh, Monseigneur!"

"But do you know why I will still aid you with all my power?"

"Monseigneur, whatever may be your reason, I shall feel the most lively gratitude toward your Royal Highness."

"It is, my dear Monsieur de Taverney, because you are not one of those whose heroism has been trumpeted forth in public places. You have done your duty bravely, but your name has not incessantly flowed from the trumpet's mouth; you are not known in Paris, that is why I like you, unless — ah! upon my word, Monsieur de Taverney — unless — but I am an egotist you see."

The young prince then kissing the queen's hand, and bowing to Andrée with an affable and more respectful manner than he generally showed to ladies, left the room.

Then the queen turned again to Philippe, saying, "Have you seen your father, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Madame, I found him in the antechamber; my sister had sent for him."

"Why did you not go to see him in the first place?"

"I had sent home my valet and my luggage; but my father sent the servant back again, with orders for me to present myself first to the king or to your Majesty."

"And you have obeyed?"

"With joy, Madame, for it gave me a chance to embrace my sister."

"It is a lovely morning," said the queen, with a gesture of delight. "Madame de Misery, to-morrow the ice will

be melted; I must have a sledge instantly, — and send my chocolate to me here."

"Will not your Majesty take breakfast? You had no supper last night."

"You mistake, my good Misery, we had supper last night. Had we not, Andrée?"

"A very good one, Madame."

"It shall not prevent me from taking my chocolate," added the queen. "Quick, quick, my good Misery; this fine weather tempts me, and the Swiss Lake will be crowded."

"Your Majesty is going to skate?" asked Philippe.

"Ah, you will laugh at us, Monsieur American, — you who have traversed lakes that are measured by miles, while ours here are measured by feet."

"Madame," replied Philippe, "here your Majesty amuses yourself with the cold, but there they die of it."

"Ah, here is my chocolate; Andrée, take a cup with me."

Andrée bowed, coloring with pleasure.

"You see, Monsieur de Taverney, I am always the same, with the same horror of etiquette as in old times. Do you remember those old days? Are you changed since then, Monsieur Philippe?"

These words went to the young man's heart. Often the regret of a woman is like the thrust of a knife to one who is interested.

"No, Madame," replied the young man; "I am not changed, at least not in heart."

"Then if your heart is the same," said the queen, playfully, "and as the heart was a good one, we will thank you in our own way; a cup for Monsieur de Taverney, Madame de Misery."

"Oh, Madame!" cried Philippe, overwhelmed; "you

cannot mean it; such an honor for a poor, obscure soldier like me!"

"An old friend," said the queen. "This day seems to remind me of my youth; I am again happy, free, proud, and yet foolish. This day recalls to me that happy time at my dear Trianon, and all the frolics we had there, Andrée and I. This day brings back to my memory my roses, my strawberries, and my birds that I was so fond of, — all, even to my good gardeners, whose happy faces often announced to me a new flower or a delicious fruit; and Monsieur de Jussieu, and that original old Rousseau, who is since dead. But what is the matter, Andrée? You are red. What is the matter, Monsieur Philippe? You are pale."

The faces of the brother and sister plainly expressed the effect of these bitter recollections; but at the last words of the queen they regained their self-control.

"I have burned my mouth with the chocolate," said Andrée; "excuse me, Madame."

"And I," said Philippe, "cannot reconcile myself to the fact that your Majesty honors me as if I were the greatest nobleman in France."

"Come," interrupted Marie Antoinette, pouring the chocolate into his cup, "you are a soldier, and accustomed to fire; so burn yourself gloriously with this chocolate, for I am in a hurry."

She laughed, but Philippe, taking the matter seriously, heroically swallowed the hot chocolate.

The queen saw him, and laughing still more, said, "You have a perfect character, Monsieur de Taverney." She then rose, and her women brought her bonnet, ermine mantle, and gloves. Andrée's toilet was completed with the same rapidity. Philippe took his hat under his arm and followed them.

"Monsieur de Taverney, I do not mean you to leave me," said the queen. "Come round to my right."

They went down the great staircase; the drums were beating, the clarions of the body-guard were playing, and this whole scene, together with the enthusiasm everywhere shown toward the beautiful queen by whose side he was walking, completed the intoxication of the young man. The change was too sudden, — after so many years of exile and regret, to such great joy and honor.

Standing in the crowd outside was a little old man, who, forgetting all etiquette, kept his eyes fixed upon the queen and Taverney. When they had passed from view, and the crowd began to break up, he was seen to run off as fast as his little legs, which had supported him for seventy years, would permit.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SWISS LAKE.

Every one knows that rectangular body of water, greenish and changeable in summer, white and rough in winter, which still goes by the name of the Swiss Lake. An avenue of linden-trees skirts each bank, and these avenues are on this day thronged with pedestrians, of all ranks and ages, who have come to enjoy the sight of the sledges and the skating. The toilets of the ladies present a brilliant spectacle of luxury and gayety. Their high coiffures, gay bonnets with the veils half-down, fur mantles, and brilliant silks with deep flounces, mingling with the orange or blue coats of the gentlemen, form an interesting scene.

Gay lackeys also, in blue and red, pass among the crowd, looking like poppies and blue-bells waving in the wind among ears of corn or in a field of clover.

Now and then a cry of admiration bursts from the crowd as Saint-Georges, the celebrated skater, executes some circle so perfect that a geometrician could scarcely have found a fault in it.

While the banks of the lake are thus crowded, the ice itself presents a scene not less gay, and much more animated. Here may be seen a sledge drawn by three enormous bloodhounds. These dogs, caparisoned with velvet that is richly emblazoned with armorial bearings, and wearing flowing plumes upon their heads, somewhat resemble those chimerical animals in the extravagant creations of Callot or of Goya. Their master, Monsieur de

Lauzun, carelessly seated in the sledge, which is lined with tiger-skins, leans over the side to breathe more freely than he perhaps could do facing the wind.

Here and there sledges of less striking appointments appear to seek retirement. A lady, masked, probably on account of the cold, is seated in one of these sledges, while a handsome skater, in a velvet riding-coat, hangs over the back, to assist and direct her progress. Whatever they may be saying to each other is quite inaudible amid this busy hum of voices; but who can blame a rendezvous which takes place in the open air and under the eyes of all Versailles? As to what they are saying, how can it concern any one else, since they are in sight; and what is it to them that they are in sight, since no one can hear what they say? It is evident that in the midst of the crowd they are alone by themselves; they pass through the multitude like two migratory birds. Whither go they? — to that unknown world which every soul is seeking, and which is called Happiness.

Suddenly there is a general movement which quickly becomes a great tumult. The queen has appeared upon the border of the lake, and has been recognized. All are preparing to leave the place to her, when she makes a sign with her hand for them to remain. The cry, "Long live the queen!" resounds, and taking advantage of the permission given, the skaters and the sledge-drivers, as if by an electric movement, form a great circle around the place where the august visitor has paused. The general attention is fixed upon her. Then the men draw near by skilful manœuvres, and the women stand with respectful bearing; there is a general endeavor to mingle with the groups of noblemen and officers of rank who hasten to pay homage to the queen.

Among the principal personages noticed by the public,

there is one of high distinction who, instead of following the general impulse and drawing near to the queen, immediately on recognizing her and her companions, leaves his sledge and throwing himself into a by-path, disappears, together with his suite.

The Comte d'Artois, who had been remarked as one of the most elegant and accomplished among the skaters, hastened to the queen, and while kissing her hand said to her in a low tone : " Do you see how our brother Monsieur de Provence flies from you ? " And he pointed with his finger toward a thicket through which Monsieur de Provence was hastening to his carriage.

" He does not wish me to reproach him," said the queen.

" Oh, as to the reproaches he expects, that is my affair ; it is not on that account he fears you."

" It is his conscience, then," said the queen, gayly.

" Not even that, sister."

" What then ? "

" I will tell you. He has just learned that Monsieur de Suffren, the glorious conqueror, will arrive this evening, and as the news is important he wishes to leave you in ignorance of it."

The queen observed that some curious persons in the crowd, forgetting their respect, had drawn so near as to overhear their conversation.

" Monsieur de Taverney," said she, " will you have the kindness to order my sledge ? and if you find your father, I give you leave of absence for a quarter of an hour to pay your respects to him."

The young man bowed and made way through the crowd to execute the order of the queen. The crowd had understood, — it has sometimes marvellous instincts ; it drew back, and the queen and the Comte d'Artois were left to themselves.

"Brother," then said the queen, "explain to me what my brother would gain by trying to keep from me the news of the arrival of Monsieur de Suffren."

"Oh, sister! is it possible that you, a woman, a queen, and an enemy, do not immediately see the intention of this scheming politician? Monsieur de Suffren arrives; no one at court knows it. Monsieur de Suffren is the hero of the Indian seas and consequently is entitled to a magnificent reception at Versailles. Well, Monsieur de Suffren arrives; the king is ignorant of his arrival; the king neglects him without knowing it, and therefore without intention; you do the same, sister. Meantime, on the contrary, Monsieur de Provence, who knows of the arrival of Monsieur de Suffren, welcomes the admiral, smiles upon him, courts him, makes verses in his honor, and by attaching himself to the hero of the Indies, becomes himself the hero of France."

"That is clear," said the queen.

"*Pardieu!*" said the count.

"You forget one single point, my dear gazetteer."

"What is that?"

"How do you know all about this fine project of our dear brother and brother-in-law?"

"How do I know it? As I know everything that he does. It is very simple; having seen that Monsieur de Provence keeps a watch on all my motions, I have agents who keep me informed as to his. Oh, this will be useful to us both, sister."

"Thank you for your alliance, brother; but the king?"

"Oh, the king is forewarned."

"By you?"

"Oh, not at all; but by his Minister of the Navy whom I have sent to him. I have nothing to do with all this,

you understand; I am too frivolous, too dissipated, too wild, to be interested in things of such importance."

"And was the Minister of the Navy also ignorant of the arrival in France of Monsieur de Suffren?"

"Ah, good Heavens! my dear sister, have you not learned enough of ministers during the fourteen years you have lived here, as dauphiness and queen, to know that they are always ignorant of precisely what they ought to know? However, I have told him about this, and he is extravagant in his expressions of gratitude."

"I should think so," said the queen.

"You see, dear sister, that this man will be grateful to me all his life; and I have need of his grateful service."

"And for what?"

"To negotiate a loan."

"Oh," cried the queen, laughing, "how disinterested you are!"

"Sister," said he, "you must want money. On the word of a son of France I offer you half of what I am going to receive."

"Oh, no, brother, keep it, keep it; thank Heaven! I want nothing just now."

"*Diable!* do not wait too long to claim the fulfilment of my promise."

"Well, in that case I must endeavor to find out some State secret for myself."

"Sister, you are taking cold," said the prince, "your cheeks are blue."

"Well, here is Monsieur de Taverney returning with my sledge."

"Then you do not want me any longer?"

"No."

"Then send me away, I beg."

"Why, do you imagine you will be in my way?"

"No; it is I, on the contrary, who want my liberty."

"Adieu, then."

"Au revoir, dear sister."

"Until when?"

"Until this evening."

"What takes place this evening?"

"Nothing, but something *will* take place."

"Well, then, what *will* take place?"

"Everybody will be at the king's card-party."

"And why so?"

"Because this evening the minister will bring Monsieur de Suffren there."

"Very well, then, — till this evening;" and the young prince, bowing with his habitual elegance, disappeared among the crowd.

The elder Taverney, who was one of the nearest spectators of all this, had been watching his son eagerly, and felt almost chagrined at this conversation between the queen and her brother-in-law, as it interrupted the familiar intercourse which his son had before been enjoying; therefore, when the young man returned with the queen's sledge, and seeing his father, whom he had not met for ten years, advanced toward him, the latter motioned him away, saying, "We will talk afterward, when you have left the queen."

Philippe, therefore, moved away, and the baron saw with joy that Monsieur le Comte d'Artois had taken leave of the queen.

The latter entered her sledge, and made Andrée get in with her, and as two tall attendants approached to push it, she said, "No, no; I do not wish to go in that way. You skate, Monsieur de Taverney, do you not?"

"Pardon me, Madame," replied Philippe.

"Give some skates to the chevalier," ordered the queen; then turning to him, "I do not know what gives me

the idea that you skate as well as Saint-Georges," she said.

"Philippe used to skate with much elegance," said Andrée.

"And now you acknowledge no rival; is it not so, Monsieur de Taverney?"

"I will do my best to justify your Majesty's opinion," said he; and putting on his skates he placed himself behind her sledge, and they started on their course.

Then might have been seen a curious spectacle.

Saint-Georges, the king of gymnasts; Saint-Georges, the elegant mulatto, the man who was the fashion, the man superior to all in bodily exercises, — Saint-Georges saw a rival in this young man who dared to compete with him. So he began immediately to fly about the queen's sledge with salutations so respectful, so full of charm, that no courtier upon the floor at Versailles could have executed them more skilfully; he described around the sledge the most rapid and most perfect circles, weaving them into a wonderful chain of rings joined together in such a way that each new curve always preceded the arrival of the sledge which left him behind; then, with a vigorous stroke of his skate he elliptically regained what he had lost. No one could observe this manœuvre without being dazzled and wonder-struck.

Then Philippe, moved to emulation, adopted a measure full of boldness: he pushed the sledge with such fearful rapidity that twice Saint-Georges, instead of finding himself in advance, finished his circle behind him; and as the velocity of the sledge was so great that many of the spectators uttered cries of terror which might alarm the queen, Philippe said, "If your Majesty desires it, I will stop, or at least go more slowly."

"Oh, no, no!" cried the queen, with that impetuous ardor with which she entered into everything, business as

well as pleasure; "no, I am not afraid; faster, if you can, Chevalier, faster!"

"Oh, so much the better; thanks for the permission, Madame. I hold you firmly, — rely on me."

And as his strong hand closed again upon the back of the sledge, it trembled throughout with the vigorous motion. He seemed to have raised it with his extended arm. Then placing upon the sledge his other hand, which he had disdained to use before, he drove forward the machine, which was a toy in his hands of iron.

From that moment he crossed each one of the circles of Saint-Georges by circles larger still, so that the sledge moved like the most agile man, turning again and again, notwithstanding its length, as quickly as could Saint-Georges upon his plain skates. In spite of its size and weight, it lived, it flew, it whirled like a dancer. Saint-Georges, more graceful, more adroit, more correct in his windings, soon began to be anxious. He had already been skating an hour. Philippe, noticing the perspiration on his face, and the efforts of his trembling knees, determined to conquer him through fatigue. He changed his method, and abandoning the circles, the making of which compelled him to lift the sledge, he pushed the equipage straight before him. The sledge flew forward with the rapidity of an arrow.

Saint-Georges with a single effort would have overtaken it at once, but Philippe seized the moment when the second stroke of the skate multiplies the velocity gained by the first, and pushed the sledge over a bit of ice as yet unmarred, with such force that he himself was left behind. Saint-Georges darted forward to catch the sledge, but Philippe, mustering all his strength, glided so skilfully on the outer edge of his skate that he passed before Saint-Georges and placed his hands on the sledge. Then by an

herculean effort he turned the sledge quickly, and sent it forward in another direction, while Saint-Georges, carried on by his momentum, and unable to check his speed, lost an irrecoverable space and remained completely distanced.

The air resounded with such acclamations that Philippe blushed in confusion. But he was much surprised when the queen, after clapping her hands, turned toward him, and with the accent of a painful excitement, said to him, "Oh, Monsieur de Taverney! now that the victory is yours, mercy! mercy! you will kill me."

CHAPTER X.

THE TEMPTER.

PHILIPPE, at this order, or rather this request of the queen, compressed his muscles of steel, and the sledge stopped abruptly.

"And now rest yourself," said she, coming out of the sledge, trembling all over. "Indeed, I never could have believed there was such intoxication in speed. You have nearly driven me out of my senses;" and she leaned for support on Philippe's arm. A shudder of stupefaction which ran through that gilded and decorated company warned her that she had again committed one of those breaches of etiquette so culpable in the eyes of jealousy and servility.

As for Philippe, overwhelmed by this great honor, he felt more ashamed than if his sovereign had insulted him publicly; he lowered his eyes, and his heart beat as though it would burst.

A singular emotion, arising no doubt from her rapid ride, agitated the queen also; for she withdrew her arm almost immediately, taking that of Mademoiselle de Taverney, and asked for a seat. They brought her one.

"Thanks, Monsieur de Taverney," said she; then in a lower tone, "*mon Dieu!* how disagreeable it is to be always surrounded by spying fools!"

A number of ladies and gentlemen soon crowded round her, and all looked at Philippe with no little curiosity,

who, to hide his confusion, stooped to take off his skates, and then fell into the background.

The queen remained thoughtful a few moments; then raising her head, "Oh!" said she, "I shall take cold if I sit here, — I must take another turn;" and she remounted her sledge.

Philippe waited, but in vain, for another order.

Twenty gentlemen soon presented themselves, but she said, "No, I thank you; I have my attendants."

Then when the servants had taken their places, "Gently," she said, "gently;" and closing her eyes she gave herself up to meditation.

The sledge moved away slowly, as the queen had ordered, followed by an eager crowd of the curious and the jealous.

Philippe remained alone, wiping drops of perspiration from his face. He looked about for Saint-Georges to console him for his defeat by some compliment; but he had received a message from his patron the Duc d'Orléans, and had left the place.

Philippe, therefore, rather tired, somewhat melancholy, and half-frightened at all that had occurred, remained stationary, following with his eyes the queen's sledge, which was now at some distance, when he felt some one touch him; he turned round and saw his father.

The little old man, more shrunken than ever, enveloped in furs like a Laplander, had touched his son with his elbow, that he might not be obliged to take his hands out of the muff that hung from his neck.

"Will you not embrace me, my son?" said he; and he pronounced these words in the tone in which the father of a Greek athlete would thank his son for a victory gained on the arena.

"My dear father, I do it with all my heart;" but there

was no harmony between the tone in which these words were spoken and their actual meaning.

"And now," said the old man, — "now that you have embraced me, go, — go quickly;" and he pushed him away.

"Where do you wish me to go, Monsieur?"

"Why, *morbleu!* over there."

"Over there?"

"Yes, to the queen."

"Oh, no, father! no, I thank you."

"What! No, I thank you! Are you mad? You will not go after the queen?"

"My dear father, it is impossible!"

"Impossible to join the queen, who is expecting you?"

"Who is expecting me, — me?"

"Yes; who wishes for you."

"Wishes for me? Indeed, father," added he, coldly, "I think you forget yourself."

"It is astonishing!" said the old man, stamping his foot. "Ah, bah, Philippe! do me the pleasure to inform me whence you have come."

"Monsieur," said his son, sadly, "I fear to reach either one of two conclusions."

"What?"

"Either that you are laughing at me, or else — excuse me — that you are losing your senses!"

The old man seized his son by the arm so energetically that he made him start. "Listen, Monsieur Philippe!" said he; "America is, I am aware, a country distant a long way from here."

"Yes, father, very distant," replied Philippe; "but I don't know what you mean. I beg you to explain."

"A country where there is neither king nor queen."

"Nor subjects."

"Nor subjects, Monsieur Philosopher. I do not deny it; that point does not interest me. But what does interest me, what pains me, what humiliates me, is that I also fear to reach a conclusion."

"What is it, father? In any case, I think our conclusions must be very different."

"Mine is that you are a simpleton, my son! Just trouble yourself to look over there."

"Well, Monsieur?"

"Well, the queen looks back, and it is the third time she has done so. There! she turns again; and whom do you think she is looking for but for you, Monsieur Simpleton, Monsieur Puritan, Monsieur American — Oh!" and the old man, in his rage, bit his glove, which would have enclosed two such withered hands as his.

"Well, Monsieur," said the young man, "if it were true, which it probably is not, that the queen is looking for me —"

"Oh!" interrupted the old man, angrily, "he says, 'if it were true!' Why, the fellow is not of my blood; he is not a Taverney!"

"I am not of your blood?" murmured Philippe; then, in a low voice, raising his eyes toward heaven, "Ought I not to thank God for it?"

"Monsieur," said the old man, "I tell you that the queen wants you! Monsieur, I tell you that the queen is looking for you!"

"You have good sight, father," said his son, dryly.

"Come," said the old man, more gently, and trying to moderate his impatience, "trust my experience; are you, or are you not, a man?"

Philippe lightly shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply.

The old man, seeing that he would receive no answer.

hazarded a contemptuous look at his son, and perceived, for the first time, all the dignity, impenetrable reserve, and steadfast will, that his face expressed.

He suppressed his sense of disappointment, applied his muff to the end of his red nose, and with a voice as sweet as that with which Orpheus addressed the Thessalian rocks, "Philippe, my son," said he, "listen to me!"

"Eh!" replied the young man, "it seems to me that I have done nothing else the last quarter of an hour, father."

"Oh!" thought the old man, "I will draw you down from your majesty, Monsieur American. You have your weak side, Colossus; let me, with my old claws, get hold of you on that side, and you will see!" Then aloud, "You have overlooked one thing, Philippe."

"What is that?"

"A matter that it is creditable to your simplicity not to have suspected."

"Come, speak, Monsieur!"

"It is a simple matter. You have come from America. You left here at a time when there was only a king, — no queen except the Dubarry, whose majesty was not very imposing. You come back; you find we have a queen, and you say, 'Let us respect her person.'"

"Doubtless."

"Poor child!" said the old man, stifling with his muff the outbreak of a cough, and a burst of laughter.

"What, Monsieur! you pity me for respecting the monarchy, — you, a Taverney-Maison-Rouge, one of the real noblemen of France!"

"Mark you, I do not speak of the monarchy, but of the queen."

"And you make a distinction?"

"I should think so! What is royalty? A crown;

peste! that must not be touched. What is the queen? A woman; oh, it is different with a woman, — she may be touched."

"She may be touched?" cried Philippe, blushing with anger and contempt; and he accompanied these words with a gesture so superb that no woman could have seen him without loving him; no queen, without adoration.

"You do not believe me," continued the old man, almost fiercely; "well, ask Monsieur de Coigny, ask Monsieur de Lauzun, ask Monsieur de Vaudreuil."

"Silence, father!" cried Philippe; "or for these three blasphemies, not being able to strike you three blows with my sword, I swear to you I will pierce my own body, and that immediately."

Taverney recoiled a step, turned on his heel as Richelieu might have done at thirty years of age, and shaking his muff, "Oh, verily!" he said, "the animal is stupid. The horse is an ass, the eagle a goose, the cock a capon. Good-by; you have made me happy. I thought I was the old man, the Cassandra; but it seems that it is I who am Adonis, it is I who am Apollo. Good-by." And he pirouetted again upon his heels.

Philippe had become gloomy. He stopped the old man.

"You did not speak seriously, did you, father?" said he. "It is impossible that a gentleman of good blood like you should give ear to these calumnies, spread by the enemies, not only of the woman, not only of the queen, but of royalty itself."

"He will not believe, the double brute!" cried Taverney.

"You have spoken to me as you would speak before God?"

"Yes, truly."

"Before God, to whom you draw nearer every day?"

The young man had continued the conversation which he had himself so disdainfully interrupted. This was a point gained by the old man, and he came toward him.

"It seems to me, my son," replied he, "that I am a gentleman, and that I do not lie — always."

That "always" was slightly humorous, but Philippe did not smile.

"It is, then, your opinion that the queen has had lovers?"

"Certainly."

"Those whom you have named?"

"And others for ought I know. Ask all the town and the court. One must have just returned from America, to be ignorant of all that is said about the queen."

"And who says this, Monsieur, — vile pamphleteers?"

"Oh! do you, then, take me for a pamphleteer?"

"No; and therein lies the evil, — that men like you repeat such calumnies, which but for that would melt away like the unwholesome vapors which sometimes obscure the most brilliant sunshine; but you and others like you, repeating them, give them a terrible stability. Oh, Monsieur! in the name of religion, do not repeat such things!"

"I do repeat them, however."

"And why do you repeat them?" cried Philippe, stamping his foot.

"Eh!" said the old man, seizing his son's arm and leering at him with his devilish smile, "to prove to you that I was not wrong when I said, 'Philippe, the queen looks back; she is looking for you. Philippe, the queen wishes for you; run to her.'"

"Oh!" cried the young man, hiding his face in his hands, "for God's sake, not another word, father; you will drive me mad!"

"Really, Philippe, I do not understand you. Is it a crime to love? It shows that one has a heart; and in the eyes of this woman, in her voice, in her motions, — is not her heart to be perceived? She loves, she loves, I tell you. But you are a philosopher, a Puritan, a Quaker, an American; you do not love. Well, then, let her look; let her turn around; let her wait, — insult her, despise her, repulse her, Philippe, that is to say, *Joseph*, de Taverney."

Having spoken these words, accentuated with a savage irony, the little old man, seeing the effect he had produced, fled like the serpent who was the first tempter into crime.

Philippe remained alone, — his heart swelling and his blood boiling. He was hardly aware that he remained for half an hour fixed to one spot; that the queen had finished her ride upon the lake; that she was returning; that she looked at him, and from the midst of her cortège called out in passing, "You must be rested now, Monsieur de Taverney; come, then, for there is no one like you to guide a queen royally. Make way, gentlemen."

Philippe ran to her, dazzled, stunned, intoxicated. He placed his hand on the back of the sledge, but started as though he had burned his fingers; the queen had thrown herself negligently back in the sledge, and the fingers of the young man touched the locks of Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "SUFFREN."

CONTRARY to the usual habits of a court, the secret had been faithfully kept by Louis XVI. and the Comte d'Artois. No one knew at what time or in what manner Monsieur de Suffren would arrive.

The king had announced a card party for the evening; and at seven o'clock he entered with the princes and princesses of his family. The queen came, holding by the hand the Princess Royal, then only seven years old. The assembly was numerous and brilliant. During the preliminaries of the meeting, while all were taking their places, the Comte d'Artois softly approached the queen, and said, "Look around you carefully, sister."

"Well?"

"What do you see?"

The queen looked all around, and seeing friends everywhere, among them Andrée and her brother, said, "I see only very agreeable faces, — the faces of friends."

"Rather, then, whom do you not see?"

"Ah, it is indeed true!" she cried.

The Comte d'Artois laughed.

"Again absent," resumed the queen. "Ah! shall I always thus put him to flight?"

"It is not that," said the Comte d'Artois; "it is only a continuation of the joke. Monsieur de Provence has gone to wait at the barrier for Monsieur de Suffren."

"Well, I do not see why you laugh at that; he has been the most cunning after all, and will be the first to receive, and pay his compliments to this gentleman."

"Come, dear sister," replied the young prince, laughing, "you have a very mean opinion of our diplomacy. Monsieur de Provence has gone to meet him at Fontainebleau, but we have sent some one to meet him at Villejuif; so that my brother will waste his time at the barrier, while our messenger will conduct Monsieur de Suffren straight to Versailles, without passing through Paris at all."

"That is excellently imagined."

"It is not bad, I flatter myself; but make up your game, sister."

There were at that moment in the card-room at least a hundred persons of the highest rank, — including Monsieur de Condé, Monsieur de Penthièvre, Monsieur de Trémouille, and the princesses.

The king alone noticed that Monsieur d'Artois was making the queen laugh, and guessing what it was about, gave them a significant glance, to show that he shared their amusement.

The news of the arrival of Monsieur de Suffren had been suppressed, as we have said; but there was a general, undefined anticipation of some unusual event, and all minds were preoccupied and expectant. Even the king, who was in the habit of playing six-franc pieces, in order to moderate the play of the court, placed on the table all the money he had in his pockets, without intending to do so. The queen, however, playing her part with more skill, diverted attention by her pretended interest in the game.

Philippe, admitted to the party, and placed opposite his sister, was absorbed in thoughts of the astounding, stupefying degree of favor unexpectedly shown to him. The words of his father recurred to his mind. He asked

himself if, indeed, this old man who had seen so much of courts was not right. He asked himself if that puritanism which confines itself to a religious adoration was not an additional absurdity which he had brought from a foreign land. This queen, so charming, so beautiful, and so friendly toward him, was she indeed only a terrible coquette, anxious to add one lover more to her list, as the entomologist transfixes a new insect or a butterfly, without thinking of the tortures of the poor creature whose heart he is piercing? "Coigny, Vaudreuil," he repeated to himself, "they have loved the queen, and have been loved by her; oh, why does this calumny haunt me so, or why will not some ray of light illumine that profound abyss, a woman's heart, — still more profound when it is the heart of a queen?"

Then Philippe turned his eyes to the other end of the table, where, by a strange chance, these gentlemen were sitting side by side, and both apparently forgetful of, and insensible to, the presence of the queen. He said to himself that it was impossible that these men could have loved and be so calm, or that they could have been loved, and could be so forgetful. Oh, were it he the queen loved, he should go wild with joy; if after loving him she were to forget him, he would kill himself in despair. From Messieurs de Coigny and de Vaudreuil, Philippe turned to look at Marie Antoinette herself. He interrogated that brow so pure, that mouth so imperious, that look so majestic; he sought in the charms of the woman to discover the secret of the queen. "Oh, no! calumnies, calumnies! only vague rumors, beginning to circulate among the people, to which the hatreds, the interests, and the intrigues of the court alone give any stability."

Philippe was at this point in his reflections when the clock in the guard-room struck a quarter to eight. At the

same moment a loud noise was heard; there were hurried steps; the butts of muskets struck the floor; a confusion of voices heard through the half-open door attracted the attention of the king, who threw back his head to listen, and then made a sign to the queen. She understood the sign, and immediately broke up the game. The players, gathering up the money, awaited some indication from the queen. The queen entered the large reception-hall, whither the king had already gone.

An aide-de-camp of Monsieur de Castries, Minister of the Navy, approached the king and said a few words to him in a low voice.

"Very well," replied the king. Then turning to the queen, he added, "All goes well."

Every one questioned his neighbor with a glance, — the "All goes well" giving them much to think of.

Suddenly Monsieur le Maréchal de Castries entered the hall, saying, in a loud voice, "Will your Majesty receive Monsieur le Bailli de Suffren, who has just arrived from Toulon?"

At that name, uttered in a loud, joyous, and triumphant tone, an indescribable tumult arose in the assembly.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the king; "and with great pleasure."

Monsieur de Castries left the hall. The whole company made a movement toward the door by which he had disappeared.

To explain this interest in Monsieur de Suffren, and why king, queen, princes, and ministers contended who should be the first to receive him, a few words will suffice.

Suffren is a name essentially French, like Turenne, like Catinat, like Jean Bart. Since the last war with England, Monsieur de Suffren had fought seven great naval battles, without sustaining a defeat. He had taken Trincomalee

and Gondalore, assured the French possessions, scoured the seas, and taught the nabob Hyder Ali that France was the first power in Europe. He had carried into his profession all the skill of an able diplomatist, all the bravery and all the strategy of a soldier, and all the prudence of a wise ruler. Hardy, indefatigable, and proud when the honor of the French flag was in question, he had harassed the English, by land and by sea, till even those proud sailors never dared to complete a victory partially won, or to try an attack on Suffren when the lion showed his teeth. But after the battle in which he risked his life like the meanest sailor, he ever showed himself humane, generous, and compassionate. We will not attempt to describe the noise and enthusiasm which his arrival at Versailles elicited from the gentlemen invited to this assembly.

Suffren was now about fifty-six years of age, stout and short, with an eye of fire, and a noble carriage; like a man accustomed to surmount all difficulties, he had dressed in his travelling-carriage. He wore a blue coat embroidered with gold, a red waistcoat, and blue trousers. He had retained the military stiff cravat over which his massive chin rounded itself as the necessary complement of his colossal head. When he had entered the guard-room, some one whispered a word to Monsieur de Castries, who was impatiently walking back and forth, and who immediately cried out, "Monsieur de Suffren, gentlemen!" Immediately the guards, seizing their muskets, drew themselves up in line as if to receive the king of France; and De Suffren having passed them, they formed behind him, in good order, four by four, as if to serve him as an escort. He, pressing the hands of Monsieur de Castries, sought to embrace him. But the Minister of the Navy gently repelled him. "No, no, Monsieur," said he; "no,

I will not take the pleasure of first embracing you from one who is more worthy of that honor than myself." And he conducted Monsieur de Suffren into the presence of Louis XVI.

"Monsieur de Suffren!" cried the king, with a radiant countenance. "Welcome to Versailles. You bring to it glory; you bring to it all that heroes give to their contemporaries on earth. I do not speak to you of the future; that is your property. Embrace me, Monsieur de Suffren."

Monsieur de Suffren had already bent his knee. The king raised him and embraced him so cordially that a prolonged murmur of joy and triumph ran through the assembly. But for the respect due to the king, all present would have broken out in shouts of applause.

The king turned toward the queen. "Madame," said he, "this is Monsieur de Suffren, the conqueror of Trincomalee and of Gondalore, the terror of the English, — my own Jean Bart."

"Monsieur," said the queen, "I wish you to know that you have not fired a shot for the glory of France, but my heart has beat with admiration and gratitude."

When she ceased, the Comte d'Artois approached with his son, the Duc d'Angoulême. "My son," said he, "you see a hero; look at him well, for it is a rare sight."

"Monseigneur," replied the young prince, "I have read about the great men in Plutarch, but I could not see them; I thank you for showing me Monsieur de Suffren."

The young duke might know, from the murmur of approbation which he heard around him, that he had said something that would not soon be forgotten.

The king now took the arm of Monsieur de Suffren, in order to lead him to his study, and talk to him of his travels; but he made a respectful resistance.

"Sire," said he, "will you permit me, since your Majesty has shown me so much goodness —"

"Oh, whatever you wish, Monsieur."

"Sire, one of my officers has committed so grave a fault against discipline, that I thought your Majesty ought to be sole judge of the offence."

"Oh, Monsieur de Suffren, I hoped your first request would be for a favor, and not for a punishment."

"Your Majesty, as I have had the honor to say, shall judge what ought to be done. In the last battle the officer of whom I speak was on board the 'Sévère.'"

"Oh, the ship that struck her flag," cried the king, frowning.

"Yes, Sire, the captain of the 'Sévère' had indeed struck his flag, and already the English admiral had despatched a boat to take possession of his prize, when the lieutenant in command of the guns of the middle deck, perceiving that the firing above had ceased, and having received orders to stop his own fire, went on deck. He saw the flag lowered, and the captain ready to surrender. I ask your Majesty's pardon, Sire; but at this sight all his French blood revolted. He seized the flag, which lay within reach, caught up a hammer, ordered all hands to resume firing, and climbing aloft, nailed the flag to the mast, close under the pennant. It was by this action, Sire, that the 'Sévère' was preserved to your Majesty."

"A splendid action!" cried the king and queen, at once.

"Yes, Sire; yes, Madame; but a grave fault against discipline. The order had been given by the captain, and the lieutenant ought to have obeyed; I, however, ask for the pardon of the officer, and with the greater earnestness, as he is my own nephew."

"Your nephew!" cried the king, "and you have never mentioned him?"

"Not to you, Sire, but I made my report to the Minister of the Navy, begging him not to speak of the matter to your Majesty until I had obtained pardon for the offender."

"Granted! granted!" exclaimed the king; "and I promise my protection to every disobedient person who shall thus vindicate the honor of the flag and of the king of France. You should have presented that officer to me, Monsieur de Suffren."

"He is here," said De Suffren; "and since your Majesty permits —" He turned around. "Approach, Monsieur de Charny," he said.

The queen started. This name awakened in her mind a recollection too recent to be effaced.

Then a young officer stepped forth from a group formed near Monsieur de Suffren, and suddenly appeared before the king.

The queen had made a movement to go forward to meet the young man, roused to enthusiasm as she was by the recital of his noble action. But when she saw the officer whom Monsieur de Suffren was presenting to the king, and heard his name, she paused, turned pale, and uttered a slight murmur.

Mademoiselle de Taverney also turned pale and looked anxiously at the queen.

As for Monsieur de Charny, without seeing anything, without showing any other emotion but that of respect, he bowed before the king, who gave him his hand to kiss; then he returned, modest and trembling, to the circle of officers, who loudly congratulated him and overwhelmed him with attentions.

There was, then, a moment of silence and emotion, during which one might have seen the king radiant, the queen smiling and undecided, Monsieur de Charny with down-

cast eyes, and Philippe, who had not failed to notice the emotion of the queen, anxious and inquiring.

"Come, come," said the king, at last,— "come, Monsieur de Suffren, come and talk with me; I am eager to hear you and prove to you how much I have thought of you."

"Sire, so much goodness —"

"Oh, you shall see my charts, Monsieur de Suffren; you shall see that every phase of your expedition was foreseen or planned in advance, in my solicitude. Come, come." Then after going a few steps, dragging Monsieur de Suffren with him, he suddenly turned to the queen, "By the by, Madame," he said, "I am about to have built, as you know, a vessel of one hundred guns; I have changed my mind as to its name. Instead of calling it as we had agreed, is it not, Madame —"

Marie Antoinette, being somewhat restored to self-possession, instantly caught the king's idea. "Yes, yes," said she, "we will call it the 'Suffren,' and I will stand sponsor, together with Monsieur de Suffren."

Shouts, until then restrained, burst forth wildly, "Long live the king! long live the queen!"

"And long live the 'Suffren!'" added the king, with exquisite delicacy; for no one could shout, "Long live Monsieur de Suffren!" in presence of the king, while the most careful observers of etiquette might cry, "Long live his Majesty's ship!"

"Long live the 'Suffren!'" repeated, therefore, the whole assemblage with enthusiasm.

The king made a sign to thank them for having so quickly caught his meaning, and led Monsieur de Suffren away with him.

CHAPTER XII.

MONSIEUR DE CHARNY.

As soon as the king had disappeared, all the princes and princesses in the room grouped themselves about the queen.

Monsieur de Suffren had made a sign requesting his nephew to await his return; and with a low bow of assent, he remained in the group as before.

The queen, who had exchanged with Andrée many significant glances, hardly lost sight of the young man, and every time she looked at him she said to herself, "It is he, certainly."

To which Mademoiselle de Taverney replied in pantomime in such a way as to leave no doubt in the queen's mind, for it meant, "Oh, good Heavens! yes, Madame; it is he, it is certainly he!"

Philippe, as we have before said, noticed this preoccupation of the queen; he saw it, and if he did not actually understand its cause, at least he had a vague sense of it.

Those who love are never mistaken in the impression they receive from those they love. He guessed therefore that the queen had just been affected by some mysterious event unknown to everybody but herself and Andrée.

Indeed, the queen had been confused, and sought refuge behind her fan, — she who usually made every one lower their eyes before her.

While the young man was wondering what this preoccupation of the queen could mean; while he was trying to read the countenances of Coigny and Vaudreuil to

assure himself that they were not concerned in the mystery, and observing that they were very much occupied in talking with Monsieur de Haga, who had come to Versailles to present himself to their Majesties, — a personage, clothed in the majestic robe of a cardinal, followed by officers and prelates, entered the salon.

The queen recognized Monsieur Louis de Rohan; she saw him crossing the room, and immediately she turned away her head without even taking the trouble to conceal the frown upon her brow.

The prelate passed by the whole company without saluting any one, and came straight to the queen, before whom he bowed, as a man of the world saluting a lady rather than as a subject saluting a queen. Then he addressed a very gallant compliment to her Majesty, who scarcely turned her head, murmured two or three cold words of ceremony, and resumed her conversation with Madame de Lamballe and Madame de Polignac.

Prince Louis appeared not to notice the chilling reception of the queen. He made his bows, turned away without haste, and with the grace of a perfect courtier addressed himself to the aunts of the king, with whom he conversed a long time, receiving from them a reception as cordial as that of the queen had been cold.

Cardinal Louis de Rohan was a man in the prime of life, of imposing figure, and of noble bearing; his face shone with intelligence and gentleness; his mouth was well cut and handsome; and his hands were beautiful. A premature baldness indicated either a man of pleasure or a man devoted to study, — and he was both. He was much sought after by women, who liked his gallantry, dignified and quiet; he was noted for his magnificence. He had, indeed, found a way to feel himself poor with an income of sixteen hundred thousand francs.

The king liked him because he was learned; the queen, on the contrary, hated him. The reasons for this hate were twofold: first, when ambassador to Vienna, he had written to Louis XV. letters so full of sarcasm on Maria Theresa that her daughter had never forgiven him; and he had also written letters opposing her marriage, which had been read aloud by Louis XV. at a supper at Madame Dubarry's. The embassy at Vienna had been taken from Monsieur de Breteuil and given to Monsieur de Rohan. The former gentleman, not strong enough to avenge himself alone, had procured copies of these letters, which he had laid before the dauphiness, thus making her the eternal enemy of Monsieur de Rohan.

This hatred rendered the cardinal's position at court not a little uncomfortable. Every time he presented himself before the queen he met with the same discouraging reception. In spite of this he neglected no occasion of being near her, for which he had frequent opportunities, as he was chaplain to the court; and he never complained of the treatment he received. A circle of friends, among whom the Baron de Planta, a German officer, was the most intimate, helped to console him for these royal rebuffs, not to speak of the ladies of the court, who by no means imitated the severity of the queen toward him.

The cardinal had just passed as a shadow over the pleasing picture which the queen saw in imagination. When he was gone therefore, Marie Antoinette recovered her serenity, and said to Madame de Lamballe, "Do you not think that this action of the nephew of Monsieur de Suffren is one of the most remarkable during the war? By the way, what is his name?"

"Monsieur de Charny, I believe," replied the princess; "was it not, Mademoiselle de Taverney?" she said, turning to Andrée.

"Yes, your Highness," replied Andrée.

"Monsieur de Charny shall describe it to us himself," said the queen; "is he still here? Let him be sought for."

An officer who stood near hastened to obey her. At the same instant, on looking round, she saw Philippe, and said impatiently, "Monsieur de Taverney, why do you not search?"

Philippe colored, and went to find the happy officer; as he had not lost sight of him since his presentation, his task was not difficult.

Monsieur de Charny appeared immediately between the two messengers, and the circle around the queen made room for him to approach; the queen had then an opportunity to examine him more attentively than had been possible the evening before.

He was a young man, about twenty-eight years of age, tall, and well made; his face, animated and yet sweet, took a character of singular energy when he spoke and dilated his large blue eyes; and he was, strange to say of one who had been fighting in India, as fair as Philippe was dark.

When he approached the group, in the centre of which stood the queen, De Charny gave not the slightest intimation that he recognized either Mademoiselle de Taverney or the queen herself. Surrounded by officers asking all sorts of questions, to which he civilly replied, he seemed to forget that there was a king who had spoken to him, or a queen who had looked favorably upon him.

That politeness, that reserve, was of a kind to elicit still further interest on the part of the queen, herself so careful in all that related to social usages. It was not only that he concealed from others his surprise on meeting so

unexpectedly the lady of the fiacre; he even rose to that height of gallantry that he would, if he could, allow the lady to believe herself unrecognized.

"Monsieur de Charny," said the queen, "these ladies have the wish — a wish quite natural, which I share with them — to hear about the affair of the ship in all its particulars. Tell us about it, I beg of you."

"Madame," replied the young officer, in the midst of a profound silence, "I beg your Majesty to spare me the recital, not from modesty, but from humanity. What I did as lieutenant of the 'Sévère' a dozen other officers doubtless wished to do, only I was the first to put it in execution; and it is not worthy being made the subject of a narration to your Majesty. Besides, the captain of the 'Sévère' is a brave officer, who on that day lost his presence of mind. Alas, Madame! we all know that the most courageous are not always equally brave. He wanted but ten minutes to recover himself; my determination not to surrender gave him this breathing time. His natural courage returned to him, and from that moment he showed himself the bravest of us all. Therefore, I beg your Majesty not to exaggerate the merit of my action, and thereby crush this deserving officer, who deplores incessantly the forgetfulness of a single moment."

"Right!" said the queen, touched, and radiant with joy at hearing the murmur of satisfaction which the generous words of the young officer had raised about her; "you are a true gentleman, Monsieur de Charny, and such I already know you to be."

The young man colored, and looked almost frightened at Andrée, fearing what the queen's rash generosity might lead her to say.

"For," continued the intrepid queen, "I must tell you all that this is not the first time I have heard of Monsieur

de Charny, who deserves to be known and admired by all ladies." It was at once perceived that the queen was about to relate a story, from which every one might glean either some petty scandal or some little secret. They made a circle, therefore, and listened in silence.

"You must know," said the queen, "that Monsieur de Charny is as considerate toward the ladies as he is pitiless toward the English. I have heard a little story about him which, I tell you in advance, does him the greatest honor, in my opinion."

"Oh, Madame!" stammered the young man, who felt as if he would have given a year of his life to be back in India.

It may readily be imagined that the words of the queen, uttered in the presence of him whom they concerned, only redoubled curiosity.

"This, then, is it," continued the queen, to her eager listeners: "Two ladies, whom I know, were detained out late, and became embarrassed in a crowd; they ran a great risk, a real danger threatened them. Happily, Monsieur de Charny passed by at the moment; he dispersed the crowd, and although the two ladies were unknown to him, and it was impossible to recognize their rank, he took them under his protection and escorted them a long way, — ten leagues from Paris, I believe."

"Oh, your Majesty exaggerates!" said Monsieur de Charny, laughing, and now quite reassured.

"Well, we will call it five," said the Comte d'Artois, suddenly joining in the conversation.

"Let it be five, then, brother," said the queen; "but the most admirable part of the story is that Monsieur de Charny did not seek even to know the names of these ladies whom he had served; but left them at the place where they wished to stop, and went away without even

looking back, so that they escaped from his protecting hands without even a moment's disquietude."

All exclaimed, admired. Charny was complimented by twenty ladies at once.

"This was noble, was it not?" added the queen; "a knight of the Round Table could not have done better."

"It was superb!" exclaimed the chorus.

"Monsieur de Charny, as the king will doubtless take upon himself to reward Monsieur de Suffren, your uncle, I, for my part, wish to do something for the nephew of that great man."

As she spoke she held out her hand to him, and Charny, pale with joy, pressed his lips to this beautiful hand, while Philippe, pale with grief, looked on from an obscure corner.

Andrée had also turned pale, and yet she could not conceive all that her brother was suffering.

The voice of Monsieur d'Artois interrupted this scene, saying loudly, "Ah, Provence! you come too late! you have missed a fine sight, the reception of Monsieur de Suffren. Really, it was one that a Frenchman can never forget. How the devil did it happen that you were not here, — you, brother, who are noted for your punctuality?"

Monsieur de Provence bit his lips with vexation, bowed absently to the queen, and replied in words without special significance. Then he whispered to Monsieur de Favras, his captain of the guards, "How does it happen that Monsieur de Suffren is at Versailles?"

"Ah, Monseigneur! I have been asking myself that question for the last hour, and have not yet found an answer."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HUNDRED LOUIS.

Now that we have introduced to our readers the principal characters of this history, or rather have renewed their acquaintance with them; now that we have taken them, both into the private house of the Comte d'Artois, and into the king's palace at Versailles, — we will return to that house in the Rue Saint Claude where we saw the queen enter incognito, accompanied by Mademoiselle Andrée de Taverney.

We left Madame de La Motte counting over, in great delight, the fifty double louis which had fallen to her so miraculously from the sky, — fifty beautiful double louis, each worth forty-eight francs, which spread out on the poor table seemed by their aristocratic presence to intensify the poverty of the humble garret. After the pleasure of possessing, Madame de La Motte knew no greater than that of displaying. The possession was of no value if it did not excite envy. For some time it had been repugnant to her feelings that her maid was acquainted with her poverty; she now hastened to confide to her this good fortune. She called Dame Clotilde, who was still in the antechamber, and placed the lamp in such a position that the gold would shine with brilliancy on the table.

When she entered, "Come and look here!" said her mistress.

"Oh, Madame!" cried the old woman, clasping her hands in astonishment.

"You were uneasy about your wages," said the countess.

"Oh, Madame! I never said that; I only asked Madame if she could pay me, which was very natural, as I had received nothing for three months."

"Do you think there is enough there to pay you?"

"Oh, Madame! if I had all that I should be rich for the rest of my life."

Madame de La Motte looked at the old woman, shrugging her shoulders with a movement of inexpressible disdain.

"It is very fortunate," she said, "that certain persons have some recollection of the name I bear, while those who ought to remember it seem to forget it."

"But in what way will Madame spend all this money?"

"In every way."

"The first thing, I think, Madame, will be to furnish the kitchen; for you will have good dinners cooked now, will you not, — now that you have money?"

"Listen!" said Madame de La Motte; "some one knocks."

"Madame is mistaken," said the old woman, always economical of her steps.

"But I tell you it is so; go at once."

"I heard nothing."

"Yes; as you heard nothing a little while ago. Well! suppose the two ladies had gone away without entering?"

This reasoning seemed to convince Clotilde, who started for the door.

"Do you hear now?" cried Madame de La Motte.

"Ah, it is true; I am going, I am going."

Madame de La Motte hastily gathered up her money, and put it into a drawer, murmuring, "Oh if Providence will but send me another hundred louis!" And these

words were spoken with an expression of such irreverent cupidity that they would have made Voltaire smile. Then she heard the steps of a man below, but could not distinguish what he said. Soon, however, the door opened, and Clotilde came in with a letter.

The countess examined it attentively, and asked, "Was this brought by a servant?"

"Yes, Madame."

"In livery?"

"No, Madame."

"I know these arms," said Jeanne to herself, glancing again at the seal. Then, bringing it to the lamp, — "Gules with nine mascles or. Who, then, bears gules with nine mascles or? But the letter will tell," and opening it, she read: "Madame, the person whom you have solicited will see you to-morrow evening, if it be agreeable to you to open your door." And that was all.

"I have written to so many people," thought the countess. "Let me reflect a little; to whom have I written? To every one. Is this a man or a woman? The writing is no guide, nor is the style; it might come from either." Then she repeated, "'the person whom you have solicited' — the phrase shows a purpose to humiliate, — it is certainly from a woman. '— If it be agreeable to you to open your door.' A woman would have said, 'Will expect you to-morrow evening,' — it is a man. And yet those ladies came here yesterday, and certainly they were of high rank. No signature — Who, then, bears gules with nine mascles or? Oh!" she broke out, "have I lost my head? — the Rohans, *pardieu!* Yes, I wrote to Monsieur de Guémenée, and to Monsieur de Rohan; one of them has answered. But the shield is not quartered, — it is therefore the cardinal. Ah, Monsieur de Rohan! the man of gallantry, the ladies' man, the man of ambition.

He will come to see Madame de La Motte, if Madame de La Motte will open her door to him. Good! he need not be anxious; the door will be open. And when? To-morrow evening." She paused and reflected. "A sister of charity, who gives a hundred louis, may be received in a garret, freeze in my cold room, and suffer on my chairs, as hard as Saint Lawrence's gridiron, though without fire; but a clerical prince, a ladies' man, — that is quite another thing. The misery visited by such an almoner must be attended by more luxury than some among those called rich can easily afford."

Then turning to Clotilde, who was getting her bed ready, she said, "Be sure to call me early to-morrow morning." Then doubtless that she might meditate more quietly, she made a sign to the old woman to leave her.

Clotilde stirred up the fire, which had been covered with ashes to give the room a more miserable appearance, and retired to the loft in which she slept.

Jeanne de Valois, instead of sleeping, was making plans all night long. She took notes in pencil by the light of the night-lamp; then having arranged her programme for the next day, she allowed herself, toward three o'clock in the morning, to sink into a sleep from which Clotilde, who had slept very little more than she, came, in obedience to her orders, to rouse her at break of day. Toward eight o'clock she had finished her toilet, which consisted of an elegant silk gown and a tasteful head-dress. Her shoes were such as were suitable both for the lady of rank and for the pretty woman; she wore a patch on her left cheek. She sent to the Rue Pont-au-Choux for a two-wheeled chaise. She would have preferred a sedan-chair, but it would have been necessary to send to a great distance for one.

This rolling chair was drawn by a robust Auvergnese, who was ordered to leave Madame at the Place Royale, where, under the arcades on the southern side, on the ground-floor of an old deserted mansion was the shop of Monsieur Fingret, an upholsterer, who had second-hand furniture for sale and to let at the lowest prices.

The Auvergnese wheeled his customer rapidly from the Rue Saint Claude to the Place Royale; so that ten minutes after setting out the countess reached the warehouses of Monsieur Fingret, where we shall find her presently admiring and choosing, in a kind of pandemonium of which we will endeavor to give a sketch.

Let the reader imagine warehouses fifty feet long by thirty feet wide, with a height of seventeen feet; upon the walls tapestries of the reign of Henri IV. and Louis XIII.; the ceilings hidden by the number of objects suspended, — chandeliers of the seventeenth century side by side with stuffed lizards, church lamps, and flying fishes.

On the floor were piles of carpeting and matting, furniture with twisted pillars and square feet, buffets of carved oak, Louis XV. consoles with gilt claws, sofas covered with rose-colored damask or Utrecht velvet, couches, capacious easy-chairs of leather, such as Sully liked, ebony wardrobes with panels in relief and brass mouldings, Boule tables with porcelain or enamelled tops, complete toilet-sets, desks inlaid with designs of musical instruments or flowers, and bedsteads in rosewood or in oak, with canopies. Curtains of every shape, of every design, of every kind of stuff, are hanging in confusion, their colors harmonizing or contrasting in every part of the warehouse. There were harpsichords, spinnets, harps, lyres, upon a table, and one might see the dog of Malborough, stuffed, with eyes of enamel. Then there was linen of every quality; dresses were to be seen hanging side by side with velvet

coats, and swords with hilts of steel, silver, or mother-of pearl. There were candlesticks, ancestral portraits, engravings, and all the imitations of Vernet, who was then in vogue, — that Vernet to whom the queen said so gracefully and so wittily, "Decidedly, Monsieur Vernet, you are the only one in France who can make both rain and fine weather."

CHAPTER XIV.

MONSIEUR FINGRET.

MADAME DE LA MOTTE, once admitted to view all these riches, understood for the first time how much she needed in the Rue Saint Claude. She needed a drawing-room to hold sofas and easy-chairs; a dining-room for tables and sideboards; a boudoir for Persian curtains, screens, and pretty tables; in short, what she needed most, if she had the drawing-room, dining-room, and boudoir, was money to buy furniture to put in this new apartment.

But with the upholsterers of Paris there has always been an opportunity for easy transactions, and we have never heard it said that a young and pretty woman had died on the threshold of a door which she was unable to get opened for her. In Paris, what one cannot buy he can hire, and it is the renters of furnished apartments who have given rise to the proverb, "To see is to have."

Madame de La Motte, in the hope of securing a suitable apartment, chose, after measuring some of the articles, a set of furniture of yellow silk with gilt nails, which had pleased her at first sight. She was a brunette.

But this set of furniture of ten pieces could never find room in the fifth story in the Rue Saint Claude. In order to arrange everything it would be necessary to hire the third story, — consisting of an antechamber, dining-room, parlor, and bedroom. She might, she thought, receive on the third story the alms of cardinals, and on the fifth those of the bureaux of charity, — that is to say, receive in

luxury those who give from ostentation, and in poverty the offerings of prejudiced persons who prefer giving to those only who are in need.

The countess, having made her decision, turned her eyes toward the obscurer portion of the warehouse, — that is, toward the place where the most splendid things were displayed. There she saw, standing hat in hand, with an impatient manner, the figure of a Parisian citizen, who twirled a key with his fingers and looked at her with a slight smile of condescension. That worthy man was no other than Monsieur Fingret himself, to whom his clerks had announced her arrival.

The same clerks might now be seen in the court-yard, occupied in the renovating of old furniture. Monsieur Fingret, fearing that his customer might observe the operations of his clerks and thus gain an insight into his methods prejudicial to his interests, closed the door which opened into the court-yard, — "for fear the dust might blind Madame — "

That "Madame — " was an interrogation.

"Madame la Comtesse de La Motte Valois," replied Jeanne, carelessly.

Monsieur Fingret, on hearing this high-sounding title, put his key in his pocket and approached the countess. "Oh!" said he, "there is nothing here suitable for Madame; I have furniture that is new, beautiful, magnificent. Madame la Comtesse must not imagine that the house of Fingret has not as handsome furniture as the king's upholsterer. Leave all this, Madame, if you please, and let me show you the other warehouse."

Jeanne colored. All this had seemed so splendid to her, — too splendid even to hope to possess it; and Monsieur Fingret's exalted opinion of her perplexed her not a little. She regretted that she had not announced herself

as a simple bourgeoise; but a skilful mind can withdraw with advantage from the most awkward situations.

"Nothing new, Monsieur," she said; "I do not want it."

"Madame has doubtless some friend's apartments to furnish."

"Precisely," she replied, "a friend's apartment. Now, you understand that for a friend's apartment — "

"Certainly, — if Madame will but choose," said Monsieur Fingret, who had no pride to prevent his selling old furniture instead of new, if he could make as much money on it.

"This set," said Jeanne, pointing to the one in yellow silk.

"Oh, but that is such a small set, Madame; there are only ten pieces."

"The chamber is not large," replied the countess.

"It is nearly new, as Madame may see."

"Yes, — for second-hand."

"Certainly," said Monsieur Fingret, smiling; "but, in short, such as it is, it is worth eight hundred francs."

That price made the countess tremble; and how was she to confess that the heiress of the Valois was content with second-hand things, and then could not afford to pay eight hundred francs for them. She thought the best thing to do was to appear angry. "Why," she said, "who thinks of buying, Monsieur? How could you imagine that I would buy such trash? I only want to hire."

Fingret made a grimace, — his customer began gradually to lose her value in his eyes. It was no longer a question of selling new furniture, or even old; the transaction had dwindled to a mere hiring. "You wish it for a year?" he asked.

"No, for only a month. It is for some one coming from the country."

"It will be one hundred francs a month."

"You jest, surely, Monsieur; why, in eight months I should have paid the full price of it."

"Granted, Madame la Comtesse."

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, then, Madame, if it belongs to you it will no longer belong to me; and I shall not have the trouble of repairing it, and making it new again,—which costs money."

Madame de La Motte reflected: "One hundred francs a month is very dear, certainly; but either I can return it at the end of that time, and say it is too dear, or I shall then perhaps be in a situation to buy. I thought of spending five, or six, hundred francs; let us do things in style, and spend three hundred."

"I will take it," she said, "with curtains to match."

"Yes, Madame."

"And carpets?"

"Here they are."

"What can you give me for another room?"

"These oak chairs, this table with twisted legs, and green damask curtains."

"Good; and for a bedroom?"

"A large and handsome bed, a counterpane of velvet, embroidered in rose-color and silver, excellent mattresses, blue curtains, and chimney ornaments in the Gothic style, but richly gilt."

"And for the dressing-room?"

"A toilet-table, hung with Mechlin lace; a chest of drawers, delicately ornamented with inlaid wood; a chiffonniere to match; sofa and chairs, covered with tapestry, and elegant fire-irons from the bedroom of Madame de Pompadour at Choissy."

"All this for what price?"

"For a month?"

"Yes."

"Four hundred francs."

"Come, Monsieur Fingret, do not take me for a grisette, to be dazzled by your fine descriptions. Please to reflect that you are asking at the rate of four thousand eight hundred francs a year, and for that I can take a house all furnished."

Monsieur Fingret scratched his ear.

"You disgust me with the Place Royale," continued the countess.

"I am very sorry, Madame."

"Prove it, then; I will give only three hundred francs for all that furniture."

Jeanne pronounced these words with so much authority that the merchant began again to think she might be worth conciliating.

"So be it, then, Madame."

"And on one condition, Monsieur Fingret."

"What, Madame?"

"That everything be arranged in its proper place by three o'clock."

"But consider, Madame, it is now ten."

"Can you do it, or not?"

"Where are they to go?"

"To the Rue Saint Claude in the Marais."

"Ah, two steps from here?"

"Precisely."

The upholsterer opened a door, and called, "Sylvain! Landry! Rémy!"

Three of the apprentices came running in, delighted to have a pretext for leaving their work, as well as a chance to see the fine lady.

"The carts and the trucks instantly. Rémy, you may take this yellow furniture; Sylvain, you take that for the dining-room; and you, Landry, that for the bedroom. We will make out the list, and if you please, Madame, I will receipt it."

"Here are six double louis, and a single louis," said the countess; "give me the change."

"Here are twelve francs, Madame."

"Of which I will give six to these gentlemen, if they do their work well;" and having given her address she returned to her wheeled chair.

An hour later she had rented the apartment on the third floor, and in less than two hours the work of furnishing the salon, the antechamber, and the bedroom was progressing rapidly. Messieurs Landry, Rémy, and Sylvain earned their six francs, with ten minutes to spare.

The lodgings thus transformed, the windows cleaned, and the fires lighted, Jeanne applied herself to making her toilet, and for two hours she was happy. She felt under her feet a thick carpet; around her were walls fittingly adorned; and she breathed a warm and perfumed atmosphere. Nothing had been forgotten; there were gilded branches from the walls for wax-lights, and glass lustres on each side of the mirror. Jeanne had also added flowers, to complete the embellishment of the paradise in which she intended to receive his Eminence. She took care even to leave the door of the bedroom a little open, through which the light of a bright fire gave a glimpse of the luxuries within.

Jeanne's coquetry went farther than this. If the light of the fire revealed the interior of that mysterious chamber, if the perfumes declared the woman, the woman herself showed signs of high birth, beauty, intelligence, taste, to make her worthy the attention of a cardinal. Her

toilet was arranged with so much elegance that Monsieur de La Motte, her absent husband, might have asked of her some explanation.

After a light repast, Jeanne buried herself in a large easy-chair near the fire in her bedroom. With a book in her hand, and one foot resting on a stool, she waited, listening to the ticking of the clock and the rumbling of distant carriages. The clock struck nine, ten, and eleven; no one came, either in a carriage or on foot.

Eleven o'clock! That is the hour for gallant prelates, who, having quickened their charity by a supper in the suburbs, can then make their way easily to the Rue Saint Claude, and thus may congratulate themselves on being humane, philanthropic, and pious at slight cost.

Midnight sounded solemnly from the steeple of the Filles-du-Calvaire. No prelate, no carriage. The wax-lights began to wane; the fire, often renewed, was reduced to ashes; the heat in the two chambers was torrid.

The old servant lamented the damage to her cap, bedecked with ribbons, which as she nodded in her sleep came in contact with the flame or the melting wax of the candles.

At half-past twelve Jeanne rose, furious, from her easy-chair, which more than a hundred times she had left during the evening to open the window and search the dimly-lighted street. The neighborhood was as quiet as before the creation of the world. She directed Clotilde to undress her, refused supper, and dismissed the old woman, who was beginning to ask disagreeable questions. Left alone, amid her silken draperies, under her fine curtains, in her excellent bed, she slept no better than she had the night before.

However, in the course of her reflections, Jeanne found excuses for the cardinal. In the first place, this excuse:

the cardinal, being grand-almoner of the court, had in hand a thousand perplexing affairs, more important than a visit to the Rue Saint Claude. And then this other excuse: "He does not know this little Comtesse de Valois," — an excuse very comforting to Jeanne. Oh, certainly she would have been inconsolable if Monsieur de Rohan had failed in an appointment after making her a first visit! This excuse Jeanne wished to test, for her complete satisfaction. She sprang from her bed, lighted the candles, and in her white night-dress looked at herself a long time in the mirror. Then she smiled, blew out the lights, and jumped into bed. She had found this second excuse a good one.

CHAPTER XV.

CARDINAL DE ROHAN.

THE next evening Jeanne without any feeling of discouragement renewed all her preparations of the night before; and on this occasion she had no time to grow impatient, for at seven o'clock a carriage drove up to the door, from which a gentleman alighted while the carriage was driven into a neighboring by-street there to await his return. At the sound of the door-bell Jeanne's heart beat so loud that its pulsations might almost have been heard; however, she composed herself, arranged some embroidery upon the table, placed a new piece of music on her harpsichord, and a newspaper on a corner of the mantel-piece. In a few minutes Clotilde opened the door and announced "The person who wrote the day before yesterday."

"Let him come in," said Jeanne; and a gentleman, dressed in silk and velvet, and with a lofty carriage, entered the room.

Jeanne, who was displeased at the incognito which he tried to preserve, decided to take all the advantage which she had gained by her reflections. She made a step forward, "To whom have I the honor of speaking?" she said, with the manner of one who patronizes rather than of one who is patronized.

"I am the Cardinal de Rohan," he replied; at which Madame de La Motte, feigning to be overwhelmed with the honor, made a reverence as though he were a king.

Then she drew forward an easy-chair for him, and placed herself in another.

The cardinal, observing this freedom from ceremony, laid his hat on the table, and looking at Jeanne, began, "It is true, then, Mademoiselle —"

"Madame," interrupted Jeanne.

"Pardon me, I forgot. It is true, then, Madame —"

"My husband is called the Comte de La Motte, Monseigneur."

"Oh, yes; a gendarme, is he not?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"And you, Madame, are a Valois?"

"Valois; yes, Monseigneur."

"A great name," said the cardinal, crossing his legs, "but rare — believed extinct."

Jeanne divined the cardinal's doubt.

"Not extinct, Monseigneur, since I bear it myself and have a brother, Baron de Valois."

"Recognized?"

"That has nothing to do with it. Recognized or unrecognized, rich or poor, he is still what he was born, — Baron de Valois."

"Madame, please explain to me this descent; you interest me."

Jeanne repeated all that the reader already knows.

The cardinal listened and looked. He did not take the trouble to conceal his impressions. And why should he? He did not believe either in her rank or her merit; but she was poor and pretty. "So that," he said carelessly, when she had finished, "you have really been unfortunate."

"I do not complain, Monseigneur."

"Indeed, I had heard a most exaggerated account of the difficulties of your position. This lodging is commodious and well furnished."

"For a grisette, no doubt," replied Jeanne, impatient to begin the attack.

"What! do you call these rooms fit for a grisette?"

"I do not think you can call them fit for a princess," replied Jeanne.

"And you are a princess," said he, in that tone of nearly imperceptible irony which so very few persons know how to impart to their utterance without becoming impertinent.

"I was born a Valois, Monseigneur, as you were a Rohan," said Jeanne, with so much dignity that the feelings of the prince were not wounded and the feelings of the man were touched.

"Madame," said he, "I forgot that my first words should have been an apology. I wrote to you that I would come yesterday; but I had to go to Versailles, to assist at the reception of Monsieur de Suffren. I was therefore obliged to forego the pleasure of visiting you."

"Monseigneur does me too much honor in remembering me to-day, and my husband will more than ever regret the exile to which poverty compels him, since it prevents him from sharing this favor with me."

The word "husband" caught the attention of the cardinal. "You live alone, Madame?" he asked.

"Entirely alone."

"That is praiseworthy in a young and pretty woman."

"I should be out of place, Monseigneur, in all society but that from which my poverty debars me."

"The genealogists do not contest your claim?"

"No; but what does that avail me," said Jeanne, disdainfully, raising with a charming gesture the little powdered curls on her temples.

The cardinal drew his chair nearer to the fire, "Madame,"

continued he, "I shall be glad to know in what I can serve you."

"In nothing, Monseigneur," she said.

"What! in nothing? Be more frank."

"I cannot be more frank than I am, Monseigneur."

"You were complaining just now."

"Certainly, I complain."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then, Monseigneur, I see that your Eminence wishes to bestow charity on me."

"Oh, Madame!"

"Nothing else. I have taken charity, but I will receive it no more."

"What can you mean?"

"Monseigneur, for some time past I have been very much humiliated; I can endure it no longer."

"Madame, you are wrong; there is no humiliation in misfortune."

"Not even with the name I bear! Come, would *you* beg, Monsieur de Rohan?"

"I do not speak of myself," said he, with embarrassment mingled with hauteur.

"Monseigneur, I know only two ways of begging, — in a carriage, or at a church door; in velvet, or in rags. Well, just now, I did not expect the honor of this visit; I thought you had forgotten me."

"Oh, you knew, then, that it was I who wrote?" said the cardinal.

"Were not your arms on the seal of the letter which you did me the honor to write me?"

"However, you feigned not to know me."

"Because you did not do me the honor to announce yourself."

"Well! this pride pleases me," said the cardinal, and

he regarded with attention the animated eyes and haughty countenance of Jeanne.

"I was saying, then," continued Jeanne, "that before seeing you I had taken the resolution of throwing off all this flimsy parade, which covers the nakedness of my name, and of going in rags, like other mendicants, to beg my bread from the passers-by."

"You are not at the end of your resources, I trust, Madame?"

Jeanne did not reply.

"You have some property, even if it be mortgaged? Some family jewels? — this, for example;" and he pointed to a box, with which the delicate fingers of the lady had been playing. "A singular box, upon my word! Will you permit me to look? Oh, a portrait!" he continued, with a look of great surprise.

"Do you know the original of this portrait?" asked Jeanne.

"It is that of Maria Theresa."

"Of Maria Theresa?"

"Yes, the Empress of Austria."

"Really!" cried Jeanne, "Are you sure, Monseigneur?"

The cardinal looked at the box more attentively than before. "Where did you get this?" he asked.

"From a lady who came the day before yesterday."

"To see you?"

"Yes."

"From a lady —" and the cardinal examined the box with minute attention.

"I am mistaken, Monseigneur, there were two ladies," continued Jeanne.

"And one of them gave you this box?" said he, with evident suspicion.

"No; she dropped it here."

The cardinal remained thoughtful for some time, — so thoughtful that the Comtesse de Valois was puzzled, and thought that it would be well for her to be on her guard.

Then the cardinal looked up, carefully observing the countess, and said, "What was the name of this lady? I beg pardon for being inquisitive. I am ashamed of seeming to play the part of a judge."

"Indeed, it is a somewhat strange question."

"Indiscreet, perhaps, but not strange."

"Yes, very strange; for if I had known the name of the lady who left this little box here, I should have returned it long before this."

"Then you know not who she is?"

"I know only that she is the head of some charitable institution."

"In Paris?"

"No; in Versailles."

"From Versailles? the head of a charitable house?"

"Monseigneur, I accept charity from ladies; that does not so much humiliate a poor woman; and this lady, who had heard of my wants, left with me a hundred louis when she went away."

"A hundred louis!" said the cardinal in surprise; then fearing lest he might wound Jeanne's susceptibility, he added, "I am not astonished, Madame, that they should give you such a sum. You deserve, on the contrary, all the solicitude of charitable persons, and your name makes it a duty to help you. What surprises me is that it was brought to you by the head of a charitable institution; they are not in the habit of giving such donations. Could you describe this lady to me, Countess?"

"Not easily, Monseigneur," replied Jeanne, to whet the curiosity of the cardinal.

"How so, since she came here?"

"Because, probably not wishing to be recognized, she hid her face in a very large hood, and was, besides, enveloped in furs." The countess had the air of trying to remember.

"However," repeated the cardinal.

"I thought I saw — but I do not affirm it, Monseigneur."

"What did you think you saw?"

"Blue eyes."

"The mouth?"

"Small, though the lips were rather thick, — the lower one, particularly."

"Tall or short?"

"Of middle height."

"Her hands?"

"Perfect."

"Her neck?"

"Long and slender."

"Her countenance?"

"Grave and noble."

"Her manner of speaking?"

"Somewhat embarrassed. But you, perhaps, know this lady, Monseigneur?"

"Why should you think so, Madame?" demanded the prelate, quickly.

"From the manner in which you question me; besides, there is a sympathy which all doers of good works have for one another."

"No, Madame, I do not know her."

"But Monseigneur, if you had some suspicion?"

"How should I?"

"Oh, suggested by this portrait, perhaps?"

"Yes, certainly, the portrait," said the cardinal,

rather uneasily, fearing that he had not been cautious enough.

"Well, Monseigneur, this portrait — "

"Oh, this portrait still appears to me to be that of — "

"That of Maria Theresa, is it not so?"

"I believe so, certainly."

"Then you think — "

"That you have received a visit from some German lady who has founded a charitable institution — "

"At Versailles?"

"At Versailles; yes, Madame." And the cardinal was silent. But it was evident that he doubted, and that the presence of this box in Jeanne's apartment renewed his distrust.

Jeanne did not wholly understand what foundation the prince could have for his suspicion — so unfavorable to her, certainly — that she was spreading a snare for him under false appearances.

Indeed, any one might have known the interest which the cardinal took in the queen's affairs; it was a court rumor which was by no means a secret, and we have already remarked upon the efforts of certain enemies to maintain the animosity between the queen and her grand-almoner.

This portrait of Maria Theresa, this box which the queen constantly carried with her, and which the cardinal had seen a hundred times in her hands, — how could it have come into the hands of Jeanne the mendicant? Had the queen really been to see her in this poor apartment? If so, was she indeed unknown to Jeanne? Was the latter, with some secret motive, concealing the honor which had been bestowed upon her?

The prelate doubted; he had already doubted the even-

ing before. The name of Valois had cautioned him to be on his guard; and if the queen had really been there, it was no longer a poor woman he had to deal with, but a princess succored by a queen who bestowed her gifts in person. Was Marie Antoinette charitable to this degree?

While the cardinal was thus pondering over his doubts, Jeanne, who watched him constantly, whom not an emotion of the prince escaped, was in agony. It is indeed real martyrdom for a conscience burdened with some mental reservation to be suspected by those whom one wishes to convince by the actual truth.

The silence was embarrassing to both.

At last, however, the cardinal broke the silence by saying, "And the other lady?"

"Oh, I could see her plainly! She is tall and beautiful, with a determined expression, a brilliant complexion, and a fine form."

"And the other lady did not call her by name?"

"Yes, once; but by her Christian name."

"What was it?"

"Andrée."

"Andrée!" repeated the cardinal, with a start which did not pass unnoticed by the countess.

The cardinal now knew everything; the name of Andrée put an end to all his doubts. It was known that the queen had gone to Paris on that day with Mademoiselle de Taverney.

The cardinal breathed again. There was neither snare nor plot in the Rue Saint Claude. Madame de La Motte appeared to him beautiful and pure as the angel of truth. Still, he would try one more test; the prince was a diplomatist.

"Countess," he said, "one thing astonishes me, — that you have not addressed yourself to the king."

"But Monseigneur, I have sent him twenty petitions."

"Without result?"

"Yes."

"Then, if the king failed you, any of the princes of the blood would have listened to your claim. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans is charitable, and often likes to do what the king refuses to do."

"I have solicited his Highness the Duc d'Orléans, Monseigneur, but uselessly."

"That astonishes me."

"Oh, when one is poor, and not supported by any one — "

"There is still the Comte d'Artois; sometimes dissipated men perform more generous actions than charitable ones."

"It was the same with him as with the others."

"But the princesses, the aunts of the king, Madame Elisabeth particularly, would refuse assistance to no one."

"It is true, Monseigneur, her Royal Highness, to whom I wrote, promised to receive me; but I know not why, after having received my husband, she never deigned to notice me."

"It is strange, certainly," said the cardinal; then, as if the thought had just struck him, he cried, "But, good Heavens! we are forgetting the person to whom you should have addressed yourself first of all."

"And to whom ought I to have applied?"

"To the dispenser of all favors, to her who never refuses help where it is deserved, — to the queen. Have you seen her?"

"Never," answered Jeanne, with perfect simplicity.

"You have never presented your petition to the queen?"

"Never."

"You have not tried to obtain an audience of her?"

"I have tried, but did not succeed."

"At least, you must have tried to throw yourself in her way, that she might remark you, and send for you to court. That would have been a method worth trying."

"I have not employed it."

"But that is very strange!"

"I have been only twice to Versailles, and then saw but two persons there; one was Doctor Louis, who had attended my poor father at the Hôtel Dieu, and the other was Monsieur le Baron de Taverney, to whom I had an introduction."

"What did Monsieur de Taverney say to you? He might have brought you to the queen."

"He told me that I was very unwise."

"How so?"

"To bring forward as a claim to the benevolence of the king a relationship which would be sure to displease him, as nobody likes poor relations."

"I recognize the egotistical and rude old baron." Then, reflecting on Andrée's visit to the countess, "It is very strange!" he thought. "The father rejects the solicitor, and the queen takes the daughter to her. Something must result from that singular contradiction." Then, aloud, "Upon my word, it surprises me to hear that you, a lady of the first rank, have never seen the king or queen!"

"Except in a portrait," replied Jeanne, smiling.

"Then," said the cardinal, "I will conduct you myself to Versailles, and will open the doors for you."

"Oh, Monseigneur, how good you are!" cried Jeanne, overwhelmed with joy.

The cardinal approached her, and said, "It is impossible but that before long everybody must become interested in you."

"Alas, Monseigneur!" said Jeanne, with an adorable sigh, "do you think so?"

"Oh, I am sure of it!"

"I fear you flatter me," she said, looking earnestly at him, for she could hardly believe in his sudden change of manner, who ten minutes before had treated her with the levity of a prince.

This look of Jeanne, thrown as if by the arrow of the archer, wounded the cardinal either in the heart or in his sensual being, awakening either the fire of ambition or the fire of desire, — fire in either case.

Monsieur de Rohan, who was a connoisseur in women, acknowledged to himself that he had seen few so seducing. "Ah, upon my word!" said he to himself, with the eternally scheming spirit of a man used to diplomacy, "it would be too extraordinary, and too fortunate, that at the same time I should meet a virtuous woman with the appearance of an intriguer, and should find in this state of poverty an all-powerful protectress."

"Monseigneur, your occasional silence disquiets me. Pardon me for saying so."

"Why so, Countess?"

"Because a man like you fails in politeness to only two kinds of women."

"Oh, good Heavens, Countess! what are you about to say? Upon my word, you frighten me!" and he took her hand.

"I repeat it," said she, — "with women whom you love too much, or with women for whom you have but little respect."

"Countess, Countess! you make me blush. Have I, then, failed in politeness toward you?"

"Certainly."

"Do not say that, — it would be terrible!"

"It is serious, indeed, Monseigneur; and yet you cannot love me too much, and I have given you no reason for not respecting me."

The cardinal took Jeanne's hand.

"Oh, Countess! you speak as if you were angry with me."

"No, Monseigneur, for you have not yet merited my anger."

"And I never will, Madame, from this day in which I have had the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"Oh, my mirror! my mirror!" thought Jeanne.

"And from this day, my solicitude for you will not cease."

"Oh, no more, Monseigneur," said the countess, who had not withdrawn her hand; "that is enough."

"What do you mean?"

"Monseigneur, do not speak to me of your protection."

"God forbid that I should pronounce that word 'protection!' Ah, Madame, it is not you that it would humiliate, but myself."

"Then Monsieur le Cardinal, let us admit one thing which will flatter me exceedingly."

"If so, Madame, let us admit that thing."

"Let us admit that you have paid a visit to Madame de La Motte Valois, — nothing more."

"But nothing less, at least," replied the gallant cardinal, and raising Jeanne's hand to his lips he kissed it with some ardor.

The countess withdrew her hand.

"Oh, politeness, only," said the cardinal, with a graceful delicacy.

Jeanne restored to him her hand, which the cardinal now kissed very respectfully.

"Ah, that is as it should be, Monseigneur."

The cardinal bowed.

"To know," continued the countess, "that I shall have a place, small though it be, in the mind of a man so

occupied and so eminent, — I assure you, it is a year's consolation."

"A year? that is a short time; let us hope for more, Countess."

"Very well, I do not say no, Monsieur le Cardinal," said she, smiling.

This "Monsieur le Cardinal," was a familiarity of which Madame de La Motte was guilty for the second time. The prelate, sensitive in his pride, might have been astonished at it; but the affair had gone so far that not only was he not astonished, he was even pleased, as if he had received a favor. "Ah, this seems like confidence," he said, drawing still nearer to Jeanne. "So much the better; so much the better."

"I have confidence, yes, Monseigneur; because I perceive that your Eminence —"

"You said 'Monsieur' just now, Countess."

"You must pardon me, Monseigneur; I am not acquainted with court usage. I say, then, that I have confidence in you because you are capable of understanding a mind like mine, adventurous and brave, and a heart still pure in spite of the trials of poverty, in spite of attacks upon me by vile enemies. Your Eminence will know how to appreciate in me — that is, in my conversation — whatever you may find that is worthy of you; as to all the rest your Eminence will grant indulgence."

"We are, then, friends, Madame; it is agreed?"

"I, indeed, wish it."

The cardinal rose and advanced toward Madame de La Motte; but as his arms were rather more widely extended than the occasion required, the countess glided lightly beyond their reach.

"A friendship of three!" she said, with an inimitable accent of raillery and innocence.

"What do you mean by 'friendship of three'?" asked the cardinal.

"Why, is there not, somewhere in the world, a poor gendarme, an exile, called the Comte de La Motte?"

"Oh, Countess, what an unseasonable memory you have!"

"But I must speak to you of him, since you do not speak of him to me."

"Do you know why I do not speak of him to you, Countess?"

"Tell me, if you please."

"It is because he will always speak for himself quite enough; believe me, husbands are not easily silenced."

"And if he speaks for himself?"

"Then others will speak of you, — will speak of us."

"How is that?"

"They will say, for example, that Monsieur le Comte de La Motte was pleased, or was displeased, because Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan came three, four, or five times a week to visit Madame de La Motte in the Rue Saint Claude."

"Ah! but do you mean that, Monsieur le Cardinal? — three, four, or five times a week!"

"What, then, means our friendship, Countess? I said 'five times;' I was wrong. I should have said six or seven times, without counting the bissextile days."

Jeanne laughed. The cardinal observed that, for the first time, she appreciated his pleasantry, and he felt flattered.

"Can you keep people from talking?" she said. "You know well that it is impossible."

"Yes; I can," he replied.

"And how?"

"Oh, very easily. With, or without, reason, I am well known to the Parisians."

"Oh, certainly, and with reason, Monseigneur."

"But you, they have the misfortune not to know."

"Well?"

"Let us reverse the situation."

"Reverse it? You mean —"

"If you should be willing — if, for instance —"

"Go on."

"If you should go out, instead of making me go out?"

"You mean that I should go to your hôtel, — I, Monseigneur?"

"You would go readily enough to call on a minister."

"A minister is not a man, Monseigneur."

"You are adorable. Well, I am not speaking of my hôtel; I have a house —"

"A private house, to speak plainly."

"By no means, — a house of yours."

"Ah!" said the countess, "a house of mine? And where is that house? I know nothing of it."

"To-morrow morning at ten o'clock you shall have the address."

The countess blushed, and the cardinal gallantly took her hand. This time the kiss that he impressed upon it was at once respectful, tender, and bold. They then bowed to each other, smiling, with that attenuated ceremoniousness which indicates an approaching intimacy.

"A light for Monseigneur!" cried the countess.

The old woman appeared with a light, and the prelate departed.

"Well, well!" thought Jeanne; "it seems to me that I have made a great step in the world."

"Come, come!" said the cardinal to himself, as he got into his carriage; "I have made a double stroke. That woman is bright enough to catch the queen as she has caught me."

CHAPTER XVI.

MESMER, AND SAINT-MARTIN.

THERE was a time when Paris, free from business, with plenty of leisure, was entirely engrossed with questions which in our day are the monopoly of the rich, who are called useless, and of the scholars, who are called idle.

In 1784, the period which we have reached, the fashionable topic, the topic which superseded all others, was mesmerism, — a mysterious science, badly defined by its discoverers, who, not feeling the necessity of rendering a discovery democratic from its birth, had allowed it to assume the name of a man, — that is, an aristocratic title, instead of one of those scientific names taken from the Greek, by the aid of which the bashful modesty of modern scholars popularizes every scientific subject.

Indeed, of what use would it have been in 1784 to popularize a science? Did the people, who for more than a century and a half had not been consulted by the governing power, count for anything in the State? No; the people were the fertile soil, which produced, — a rich harvest to be reaped; but the lord of the soil was the king, the harvesters were the nobility.

In our day all this is changed. France is like a secular hour-glass: for nine hundred years it has marked the hour of royalty; the powerful hand of the Lord has turned it: for centuries to come it will mark the era of the people.

In 1784 the name of a man was a recommendation. In these days success depends upon the names of things.

But let us leave *to-day* and look back upon *yesterday*.

Doctor Mesmer was in Paris, as we have already heard from Marie Antoinette. This Doctor Mesmer deserves a few words from us, as his name was then on everybody's lips. He had, in 1777, brought from Germany, the land of mysteries, a science inflated with clouds and lightning. By the flashes of this lightning the man of science saw but the clouds forming above him a dark canopy; the vulgar saw only the lightning. He had begun his career in Germany by writing a thesis upon the influence of the planets. He had endeavored to prove that these celestial bodies, by virtue of that power which produces their mutual attraction, exercised an influence over living bodies, and particularly over the nervous system, by means of a subtle fluid which exists everywhere in the universe. But this first theory was too abstract; one must, to understand it, be initiated in the science of the Galileos and the Newtons; and in order that this theory should become popular, it would have been necessary for the whole body of the nobility to be converted into a scientific society. He therefore abandoned this theory, and as the basis of his doctrine, gave his attention to the magnet, which was then awakening much interest, and was supposed to be efficacious in curing disease.

Mesmer therefore added the action of magnets to his first system, and tried to see what he could derive from this combination. Unfortunately for Mesmer, on arriving at Vienna, he found a rival, named Hall, already established there; and this rival pretended that Mesmer had robbed him of his discoveries. Thereupon Mesmer — a man of imagination — announced that he had abandoned the magnet as useless, and that he effected cures not by mineral, but by animal, magnetism.

This, although called by a new name, was not in reality

a new science. Traditions in regard to it had been handed down from the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, and it had been revived from time to time by the sorcerers of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, many of whom had paid for their knowledge with their lives.

Urbain Grandier was nothing more than an animal magnetizer.

Mesmer had heard of the miracles of this science.

Joseph Balsamo, the hero of one of our books, had left some traces of his work in Germany and especially in Strasburg.

Mesmer set out in search of these fragments of knowledge, — scattered and fluttering like those will-o'-the-wisps which hover at night over stagnant pools, — and condensed them into a science to which he gave the name of mesmerism. He then communicated his system to the Academies of Science in Paris, London, and Berlin. The first two did not deign to reply to him; the third said that he was mad.

Mesmer recalled the Grecian philosopher who denied that there was such a thing as motion, and whom his antagonist confounded by walking away. He came to France, and took out of the hands of Doctor Storck, and of the oculist Wenzel, a young girl seventeen years old, who had disease of the liver and amaurosis, and after three months of his treatment, restored her health and her sight.

This cure convinced many people, — among them a doctor called Deslon, who, at first an antagonist, became his disciple.

From this time the reputation of Mesmer rapidly increased. The Academy declared against the innovator; the court was in his favor. Negotiations were opened by the ministry to induce Mesmer to enrich humanity by the

publication of his doctrine. The doctor fixed his price. There was some haggling, and at last the government offered him, in the king's name, an income for life of twenty thousand francs for public lectures, and ten thousand more for the instruction in his system of three persons to be chosen by the government.

Mesmer, however, indignant at the royal parsimony, refused, and set out for the Baths at Spa with one of his patients; but while he was gone Deslon, his pupil, possessor of the secret which he had refused to sell for thirty thousand francs a year, opened a public establishment for the treatment of patients.

Mesmer was informed of this disastrous fact; he denounced Deslon's conduct as treacherous and thievish; he was near going mad. Then one of his patients, Monsieur de Bergasse, conceived the idea of forming a company. A capital of three hundred and forty thousand francs was raised on the condition that the secret should be revealed to the shareholders. Mesmer agreed to this, and with the money returned to Paris.

The time was propitious. France was in that state when, as often happens in communities where there is nothing of an excitable nature to occupy the minds of the people, every one feels dimly that a crisis is approaching. Under the apparent calmness there prevailed a general uneasiness, and all were seeking for something that would create excitement. They had lost all interest in questions of national import, and a new opera was to them of more moment than a treaty of peace with England, or the recognition of the independence of the United States. In fact, every one was ready to be carried away by anything so mysterious and strange as this theory, which proposed to cure invalids, restore intelligence to fools, and amuse the wise.

Everywhere Mesmer was talked of. What had he done? On whom had he performed these miracles? To what great lord had he restored sight or health? What lady's nerves, worn out by dissipation, had he soothed? What young girl had he compelled to predict the future in a magnetic trance?

The future! — that great word of all ages, that word of absorbing interest for all minds, the solution of all problems. But what, then, was the present?

A royalty without radiance, a nobility with authority, a country without commerce, a people without rights, a society without confidence. From the royal family, uneasy and isolated on its throne, to the plebeian family starving in its hovel, there was misery, shame, and fear everywhere.

To forget others while thinking of self, to draw from new, unknown sources the assurance of long life and unalterable health, to snatch something from avaricious fate, — was not this the object of an aspiration, easy to be understood, toward that unknown good from which Mesmer would lift the veil?

Voltaire was dead, and there was no longer in France a single burst of laughter, except the laugh of Beaumarchais, more bitter than that of the master. Rousseau was dead; there were no more religious philosophers in France. Rousseau had wished to sustain belief in God; but since Rousseau was no more, no one dared to venture that undertaking for fear of being crushed under its weight.

War had formerly been a serious occupation for the French people; but now the only war in which they were engaged was in America, where the people fought for what they called "independence," and what the French call by the more abstract word "liberty." And even this distant war — this war carried on not only in another country, but

in another world — had come to an end. All things considered, was it not better worth while to give attention to Mesmer, — that German doctor who, for the second time within six years, created an excitement in France, — than to Lord Cornwallis or Monsieur Washington, who were so far away that probably the people of Paris would never see either of them? Mesmer was there; they could see him, touch him, and — supreme ambition of three quarters of Paris — could be touched by him.

And so this man, who on his arrival in Paris had not been sustained by any one, not even by the queen, his compatriot, who aided so willingly those who came from her country; this man, who but for Doctor Deslon who betrayed him would have remained in obscurity, — this man reigned supremely over public opinion, leaving far behind the king, of whom the public had never talked, Monsieur de Lafayette, of whom they did not yet talk, and Monsieur Necker, of whom they talked no longer.

And as if this age had undertaken the task of giving to every mind according to its aptitude, to every heart according to its sympathy, to every body according to its need, — in contrast with Mesmer arose Saint-Martin, the teacher of spiritualism, whose doctrine came to comfort the souls wounded by the positivism of the German doctor.

Imagine an atheist with a religion more attractive than religion itself; a republican full of consideration and respect for kings; a gentleman belonging to the privileged class, tender and loving toward the people, — endowed with the most logical, the most charming eloquence, attacking the religions of the world which he calls senseless, for the sole reason that they are divine!

Imagine Epicurus, powdered, in embroidered coat, spangled waistcoat, satin small-clothes, silk stockings and red shoes, — Epicurus, not content with overthrowing gods in

whom he does not believe, but attacking governments, which he terms like religions, because they can never agree among themselves, and almost always cause misfortunes to mankind, arguing against social law, which he attacks by saying: "It punishes in the same way crimes of different degrees; it punishes the effect without considering the cause."

Suppose now that this tempter, who calls himself "the unknown philosopher," instead of saying, "All men are equal," which is an absurdity, invents this formula: "Intelligent beings are all kings." And then conceive the effect of such a sentiment, falling on a society without hope, without direction. Remember that at this time women were tender and foolish, and men were eager after power, honor, and pleasure; that it was a time when kings allowed their crowns to rest lightly on their heads, — crowns toward which, for the first time, curious and threatening looks were cast from places of obscurity. It will not then seem strange that such a doctrine should find proselytes, — a doctrine which said: "Choose from among yourselves a superior soul, — superior in love, in charity, in the capability of loving well, of making others happy; then when this soul of a man shall be clearly revealed to you, bend the knee, humiliate yourselves, annihilate yourselves, inferior souls, in order to leave room for the dictatorship of this soul, whose mission it is to restore you to your normal condition, — that is, to an equality of suffering amid unequal gifts and opportunities."

Add to this that the unknown philosopher surrounded himself with mystery; that he sought the deepest obscurity to discuss in peace, far from spies and parasites, the grand social theory which might become the policy of the world.

"Listen to me," he said, "faithful souls, believing

hearts, — listen, and try to understand me; or rather do not listen, unless you have sufficient interest and desire for knowledge to understand me, for you will find it difficult, and I will not impart my secrets to any who will not tear away the veil from before them. I say things that I do not wish to seem to say, therefore I shall often appear to say what I really do not say."

Thus worked for the glorification of soul and of matter, while dreaming of the annihilation of God and the destruction of the religion of Christ, these two men, who had divided the more serious portion of the French people into two camps.

To the vat of Mesmer, from which flowed forth health and happiness, was drawn the sensual life, the elegant materialism of this degenerate nation; while for the study of truth and error were united the pious, charitable, loving souls, thirsting for realities after their long familiarity with delusions.

If within these privileged spheres ideas either diverged, or became confused, it must be remembered in what a crude state the citizens and the people — since called "the third estate" — still remained; they only guessed that something was being done for them, and in their impatience burned with a desire to steal the sacred fire, like Prometheus, to animate a world all their own in which they should manage their own affairs.

Conspiracies in the forming stage of conversations, associations in the form of clubs, social meetings in the form of quadrilles, — that is, civil war and anarchy, — would be discerned under all this by the thoughtful observer.

Alas! now that the veils have been torn away, now that the people have been ten times overthrown by the Promethean fire which they stole, tell us what the thinker could have seen at the end of this strange eighteenth cen-

tury, if not the decomposition of a world, if not something like that which happened after the death of Cæsar and before the accession of Augustus. Augustus was he who separated the Pagan from the Christian world, as Napoleon is he who has separated the feudal from the democratic world.

Perhaps we have led our readers into a digression which has seemed to them somewhat long; but indeed it would have been difficult to treat of that epoch without touching upon the serious problems which pertained to its very life and character.

Now the effort has been made, — the effort of a child who with his nails scratches off the rust from an antique statue, in order to read beneath the rust an inscription almost effaced.

Let us return to our story. If we continue to occupy ourselves with real events, we shall say too much for the romancer, too little for the historian.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VAT.

We have endeavored to give an idea, in the last chapter, of the interest and enthusiasm which drew such crowds of people to see the cures publicly performed by Mesmer.

The king, as we know, had given permission to the queen to go and see what all Paris was talking of, accompanied by one of the princesses. It was two days after the visit of Monsieur de Rohan to the countess. The weather was fine. The thaw had come, and hundreds of sweepers were employed in cleaning away the snow from the streets. The clear blue sky was just beginning to be illumined by its first stars, when Madame de La Motte, elegantly dressed, and presenting every appearance of opulence, arrived in a coach which Clotilde had carefully chosen as the best-looking at the Place Vendôme, and stopped before a brilliantly lighted house. This house was the one occupied by Doctor Mesmer. Numbers of other carriages were waiting at the door, and a crowd of people had collected to see the patients arrive and depart. These spectators, when they saw some rich invalid, enveloped in furs and satins, carried in by footmen, seemed to find some consolation in the evident proof it afforded that God made men healthy or unhealthy without reference to their purses or their genealogies. A general murmur would arise when they recognized some duke paralyzed in an arm or leg, or some marshal whose feet refused their office, less in consequence of military fatigue and marches

than of halts made with the ladies of the opera or of the Comédie Italienne. Sometimes it was a lady, carried in by her servants, with drooping head and languid eye, who, weakened by late hours and an irregular life, came to demand from Doctor Mesmer the health she had vainly sought to regain elsewhere.

Many of these ladies were as well known as the gentlemen, and their names circulated noisily through the crowd; but a great many — doubtless those whose names would have created the most scandal — avoided public gaze, on this evening at least, by wearing satin masks, for there was a ball at the Opera that night, and many of these ladies intended to go to it immediately on leaving the Place Vendôme.

Through this crowd Madame de La Motte walked erect and firm, with a mask on her face; she elicited from them only the exclamation, "Ah, that one cannot be very ill!"

But it is not to be supposed that this phrase implied the total absence of comments. For if Madame de La Motte was not sick, why should she come to Doctor Mesmer's? If the crowd had been acquainted, as we are, with the events we have before related, it would have seen that nothing was more natural than this visit.

Indeed, Madame de La Motte had been reflecting upon her conversation with Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan, and especially upon the particular attention with which the cardinal had honored that box containing the picture, which had been left in her house. And as in the name of the owner of this box lay the secret of the sudden change to graciousness in the manner of the cardinal, Madame de La Motte had decided upon two methods by which she might try to discover this name.

In the first place, she had resorted to the more simple of

the two. She had gone to Versailles to inquire at the bureau of charity for the German ladies. There, as we may imagine, she had received no information. There were a great many German ladies living at Versailles, on account of the avowed sympathy of the queen for her country-women; there were supposed to be one hundred and fifty or two hundred of them. They were very benevolent, but there was no bureau of charity supported by them.

Therefore Jeanne's inquiries about the two ladies who had come to visit her had proved fruitless. In vain did she say that one of them was called Andrée; no one knew in Versailles a lady of that name, which moreover was not German. To ask Monsieur de Rohan himself what name he suspected, would show him that she was interested in the subject; it would, moreover, detract from the pleasure and merit of a discovery made in spite of the whole world and apparently beyond the bounds of possibility.

Now, since there had been mystery in the conduct of these ladies at her house, mystery in the astonishment and reserve of Monsieur de Rohan, it was by way of mystery that she must reach the solution of these enigmas. Moreover, Jeanne found an enticing attractiveness in this struggle with the unknown.

She had heard that in Paris for some time past there had been a man of learning, a worker of miracles, who had discovered the means of expelling from the human body disease and pain, as Christ drove out demons from the bodies of the possessed. She learned that this man not only cured physical ills, but wrested from the soul the wretched secret which was destroying it. The most obstinate will of his patients had been seen to soften and change to the docility of the slave under his singular influence.

And then, in the sleep which succeeded the pain, — after the learned physician had quieted the most disturbed organization by plunging it into complete forgetfulness, — the soul, delighted with the rest it owed to the enchanter, gave itself up wholly to the control of this new master. From that moment he directed all its workings; it was subservient to him; and every thought of this grateful soul was transmitted to him in a language which had over ordinary language the advantage, or disadvantage perhaps, of being absolutely truthful.

Moreover, issuing from the body which served as its prison, at the first order of him who for the moment controlled it, this soul would roam through the world, mingle with other souls, probe them incessantly, search them pitilessly; and then like the hound who forces the game from the thicket where it is hiding, as it thinks in safety, it would finally drive this secret from the heart where it was buried, pursue it, overtake it, and bring it to the feet of the master.

Hence came the revelation of many marvellous secrets. Madame de Duras had recovered in this way a child stolen when out at nurse; Madame de Chautoné, an English dog no larger than her hand, for which she would have given all the children in the world; and Monsieur de Vaudreuil, a lock of hair for which he would have given half his fortune. These revelations had been made by clairvoyants, operated upon magnetically by Doctor Mesmer.

Thus persons could choose, in the house of the illustrious doctor, the secrets the best calculated to test this faculty of supernatural divination; and Madame de La Motte expected, in being present at one of the assemblies, to meet this phœnix, and by his means to discover the owner of the box which was for the time being the object

which occupied all her attention. With this purpose in mind she entered in great haste the room where the patients were assembled.

This apartment was divided into two principal salons. After crossing the antechambers and exhibiting the necessary passport to the ushers, the visitor was admitted to a salon, the windows of which were hermetically closed, excluding light and air during the day-time, and noise and air during the night. In the middle of the salon, under a chandelier whose candles gave a feeble and almost dying light, could be seen a large vat closed with a cover. It was not of elegant shape; it was not ornamented; no drapery concealed the nakedness of its metal sides. This vat was known as "Mesmer's tub."

What virtue did this vat contain? Nothing can be more easy to explain. It was almost entirely filled with water, impregnated with sulphur; and porous jars, arranged methodically on the bottom of this vat, inverse to one another in alternation, were saturated with this solution. Thus were established the mysterious cross-currents by the power of which cures were effected.

To the cover was attached, by an iron ring, a long rope. The patients were seated on chairs ranged around the vat, — men and women together, some indifferent, some serious, some anxious, awaiting the result of the experiment. A servant wound this rope around the diseased limbs of the patients, so that all should receive at the same time the charge of electricity from the vat. And besides, in order that the action of the animal fluids, transmitted from one to another, might not be interrupted, the patients were instructed to put themselves in contact with one another, shoulder to shoulder, elbow to elbow, or foot to foot, in such a manner that the warming

and regenerating influence should pass through all at the same moment.

This medicinal performance was indeed a curious spectacle, and it is not strange that Parisians were excited by it to a high degree.

Twenty or thirty patients were seated around the vat. A servant silently wound the cord about them, and then quietly withdrew, after indicating to them certain iron rods which, passing through holes in the vat, would conduct the healing fluid to any selected portion of the body.

Then a mild and penetrating warmth pervaded the room; the air was filled with delicate perfumes, under the influence of which the most rebellious brain must yield its force of will. Soon the invalids abandoned themselves to the voluptuous impressions induced by this atmosphere; and then was heard music, soft and thrilling, coming from invisible sources, rising and dying away again amid the perfumes and the warmth. It struck upon the nerves with irresistible power. It seemed like one of those mysterious, inexplicable sounds in Nature by which even animals are surprised and charmed, — like a wailing of the wind among the crevices of the rocks.

Upon all faces, at first animated by surprise, soon appeared signs of physical enjoyment, induced by all these sensuous influences. The soul yielded, and came forth from the refuge to which it resorts when attacked by bodily ills, and expanded itself in joy and freedom, controlling and transforming the material frame.

The invalids took in their hands the iron rods, and applied them to breast, heart, or head, according to the location of the special malady to be treated.

Imagine, then, on all these faces, happiness succeeding to suffering and anxiety; imagine the drowsy content resulting from these all-absorbing sensations; imagine the

heavy silence, interrupted only by sighs, which brooded over that assembly, — and you will have an exact idea of the scene which, two thirds of a century after it occurred, we have now endeavored to sketch.

The actors in this scene were divided into two classes. There were in the first place the invalids, but little concerned for what is called "respectability," — a barrier much regarded by the average citizen, but easily overstepped by the very high or by the very low, — who had come to that salon only to be healed, and who gave all their attention to the fulfilment of that purpose. Besides these, there were the sceptical, or simply curious, who, not suffering with any infirmity, had visited Mesmer's house as they would have gone to the theatre, wishing either to witness the effect produced on those who were seated around the enchanted vat, or as spectators, to study this new system of physics. These persons were chiefly interested in the patients, and in those who shared in the operation, though in good health.

Among those of the first class, zealous disciples of Mesmer, might be distinguished a young woman of fine form and beautiful face, somewhat extravagantly dressed, who, submitting herself to the action of the fluid, and by means of an iron rod applying to her person — to her head and the lower part of her chest — the strongest doses of the fluid that could be obtained, began soon to roll her lovely eyes, as if overcome with languor, while her hands trembled under those first titillations which indicate the invasion of the magnetic influence. When her head was leaning on the back of the easy-chair every one could examine at leisure that pale brow, those convulsed lips, and that beautiful neck, taking on by degrees the appearance of marble, as her blood circulated more rapidly.

The spectators looked at the young woman with aston-

ishment, and two or three among them, leaning toward one another, uttered words which doubtless had some strange significance, and which had the effect to increase the attention which these persons were bestowing on the woman.

Among the visitors of the second class above mentioned — the curious spectators — was Madame de La Motte, who, without fearing to be recognized, or caring much if she were, held in her hand the satin mask which she had worn while going through the crowd. She stood near the door, leaning against a pillar, and being veiled by a curtain she could see without being seen. And in all that scene what seemed to her most worthy of observation was the face of the young woman agitated by the magnetic fluid. In fact, that face had interested her to such a degree that for several minutes she had stood motionless, riveted to the spot by her eagerness to see, and her desire to ascertain something further. "Oh!" she murmured, without taking her eyes from the lovely patient, "there can be no doubt about it. It is the sister of charity who visited me, and who has occasioned all Monseigneur de Rohan's interest in me." Firmly convinced that she could not be mistaken, and eager to take advantage of the chance which had procured for her the information she had vainly sought, she left her place and went nearer to the young woman.

At that moment the person in question closed her eyes, contracted her lips, and beat the air feebly with her hands, — which, it must be admitted, were not precisely those delicate hands with tapering fingers, those hands white as wax, which Madame de La Motte had so much admired a few days before.

The contagion of the crisis suddenly seized upon the greater number of the patients, moved as they were already by the music and the perfumes. Every nervous

susceptibility had been addressed. Men and women, carried away by the example of their young companion, began to utter sighs, murmurs, shouts, and moving their arms, legs, and heads, gave themselves up, openly and irresistibly, to that paroxysm which the master called a "crisis."

At that moment a man appeared in the salon, without any one knowing how he had entered. He might have sprung from the vat, or perhaps was condensed from the perfumed atmosphere of the room. His lilac-colored coat, and his handsome face, pale, calm, and intellectual, were quite in harmony with the mystery of his appearance. He held in his hand a long wand, which was plunged, so to speak, into the famous vat. He made a sign; the doors opened, twenty robust servants rushed in, and with skilful address seized the patients as they wavered in their arm-chairs, and bore them into the neighboring hall.

While this was going on, and the young woman already referred to, abandoned herself to a paroxysm of delight, Madame de La Motte, who, with other curious spectators, had moved toward the hall intended for the patients, heard a man cry out: "It is she; it is certainly she!"

Madame de La Motte was about to ask, "She! who?" when suddenly two ladies entered the farther end of the first salon, leaning upon each other, and followed at a respectful distance by a man, who, though disguised as a bourgeois, had still the appearance of a servant.

The tournure of these ladies, one of them especially, struck Jeanne so forcibly that she made a step toward them, when a cry from the young woman near her startled every one. The same man whom Jeanne had heard speak before, now called out, "But look, gentlemen, it is the queen."

At these words, Jeanne started.

"The queen!" cried many voices in surprise. "The queen here? The queen in that state? Impossible!"

"But look," said he again; "do you know the queen, or not?"

"Indeed," said many, "the resemblance is incredible."

Madame de La Motte had replaced her mask, and could therefore ask questions without fear of being recognized. "Monsieur," said she to the speaker, who was a stout man with quick, observant eyes, "did you say the queen?"

"Oh, Madame, there is no doubt of it."

"And where is she?"

"Why, that young lady that you see there, on the violet cushions, and in such a state that she cannot moderate her transports, is the queen."

"But on what do you found such an idea, Monsieur?"

"Why, simply upon this fact, Madame, that that woman is the queen," replied the accuser, imperturbably. And he left Jeanne to go and spread his news among the rest.

She turned from the almost revolting spectacle, and going near to the door, found herself face to face with the two ladies she had seen enter. When she saw the face of the elder one she uttered a cry of surprise.

"What is the matter?" asked the lady.

Jeanne quickly took off her mask, and asked, "Do you recognize me, Madame?"

The lady made, but quickly suppressed, a movement of surprise, and said, with a slight agitation, "No, Madame."

"Well, Madame, I recognize you, and will give you a proof."

On hearing these words the two ladies drew nearer together in fright. Jeanne drew the box from her pocket, saying, "You left this at my house."

"But supposing this to be true, what makes you so agitated?"

"I am agitated by the danger that your Majesty is incurring here."

"Explain yourself."

"Not before you have put on this mask, Madame;" and she offered hers to the queen, who hesitated, thinking herself sufficiently concealed by her hood.

"I beg your Majesty; there is not an instant to lose."

The queen put on the mask; "And now, come, come!" said Jeanne; and she drew away the two ladies so eagerly that they stopped only at the street-door, which they reached in a few seconds.

"But what is the matter?" said the queen, taking breath.

"Your Majesty has not been seen by any one?"

"I believe not."

"So much the better."

"But, in short, will you explain to me —"

"Will not your Majesty believe your humble servant when she tells you that you are incurring the greatest danger?"

"Still — that danger — what is it?"

"I shall have the honor to tell your Majesty whenever you will grant me an hour's audience; but it is a long story, and your Majesty might be seen and recognized." Then seeing that the queen looked displeased, "Oh, Madame!" said she, turning to the Princess Lamballe, "join your petitions to mine, and persuade the queen to leave this place, and to leave it immediately."

The princess made a gesture of entreaty.

"Then let us go," said the queen, "since it is your wish." Then turning to Madame de La Motte, "You ask for an audience?" she said.

"I beg for that honor, that I may explain my conduct to your Majesty."

"Well, bring this box with you, and apply to Laurent, the door-keeper; he will have his orders." Then going into the street, she called in German, "Kommen sie da, Weber!"

A carriage immediately drove up; they got in, and were soon out of sight.

When they were gone, Madame de La Motte said to herself, "I have done right so far; as to the future, I must reflect."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADEMOISELLE OLIVA.

During this time the man who had pointed out the fictitious queen to the people, touched on the shoulder another man who stood near him, in a threadbare coat, and whose eyes were eagerly observant, and said, "For you, who are a journalist, here is a fine subject for an article."

"How so?" replied the man.

"Would you like an abstract of it?"

"Certainly."

"Here it is: The danger of being born the subject of a king governed by a queen who indulges in such paroxysms as these."

The journalist laughed. "But the Bastille?" he said.

"Nonsense, are there not anagrams, by the aid of which all royal censors can be avoided? Who can interfere with you, if you retail the history of Prince Silou and the Princess Etteniotna, queen of Narfec? What do you say to that?"

"It is an admirable idea!" said the journalist, with enthusiasm.

"And I do not doubt that an article entitled 'The Paroxysms of the Princess Etteniotna at the House of the Fakir Remsem' would have great success."

"I believe it would."

"Then go and write it with your best ink."

The journalist pressed the hand of the unknown. "Shall I send you some copies, Monsieur?" said he.

"I will do so with pleasure, if you will give me your name."

"Certainly, yes! The idea pleases me; and written out by you its value will be increased a hundred fold. What is the usual circulation of your journal?"

"Two thousand."

"Then do me a favor. Take these fifty louis, and publish six thousand."

"What! Monsieur, you overwhelm me; may I not know the name of so generous a patron of literature?"

"You shall know it when I call for one thousand copies at two francs each. Will they be ready in a week?"

"I will work night and day, Monsieur."

"Let it be amusing."

"It shall make all Paris laugh until the tears come, except one person."

"Who will weep tears of blood, will she not?"

"Oh, Monsieur, how witty you are!"

"You are very good. By the way, date the publication from London."

"As usual."

"Monsieur, I am your humble servant;" and the stout man dismissed the journalist, who, with his fifty louis in his pocket, hurried away silently, like a bird of evil omen.

The unknown again turned to look at the young woman, who had now subsided into a state of exhaustion. He noticed the fine and voluptuous lines in that delicate beauty, her noble grace in the unconscious attitude assumed in sleep; then retracing his steps, "Really," he said to himself, "the resemblance is frightful! God had his motives in creating it, and has no doubt condemned her to whom the resemblance is so strong."

While he made these reflections, the young woman rose slowly from the midst of the cushions, leaning on

the arm of a neighbor already roused from the ecstasy, and began to arrange her somewhat disordered toilet. She blushed a little on seeing the attention she attracted from the spectators, answered with coquettish politeness the grave but kindly questions of Mesmer; then stretching her round arms and pretty legs, like a cat waking out of sleep, she walked across the three rooms, meeting bravely the looks, whether of mockery, lust, or alarm, which the spectators fixed upon her. She was somewhat astonished, however, when she found herself saluted with deep and respectful bows by a group which had already been assembled by the indefatigable stranger, who placed himself behind them, and whispered, "Never mind, gentlemen, never mind, she is not the less the queen of France, — let us salute her."

The little person who was the object of so much respect hastened with some anxiety through the last vestibule, entered the court-yard, and looked about for a coach or chair. Seeing none, she was about to set off on foot, when a groom approached, and said, "Shall I call Madame's carriage?"

"I have none," she replied.

"Madame came in a coach?"

"Yes."

"From the Rue Dauphine?"

"Yes."

"I will take Madame home."

"Do so, then," said she, deliberately, feeling only for a moment the uneasiness which this unexpected proposal would have caused any other woman.

The man made a sign, and a carriage drove up. He opened the door for her, and then said to the coachman, "To the Rue Dauphine." They set off, and when they had reached the Pont Neuf, the little lady, who liked

very much this way of travelling, regretted that she did not live as far off as the Jardin-des-Plantes. They soon stopped, however; the footman handed her out, held out his hand for the key, opened the door to spare the little lady's fingers, and after seeing her safely inside the dark passage, bowed, and immediately drove off again.

"Really," said she to herself, "this is an agreeable adventure; it is very polite in Monsieur Mesmer. Oh, I am very tired! and he must have seen that. He is a great doctor;" saying these words, she mounted to the second story, and knocked at a door, which was quickly opened by an old woman.

"Oh, good-evening, mother! Is supper ready?"

"Yes, and growing cold."

"Has *he* come?"

"No, not yet; but the gentleman —"

"What gentleman?"

"He who was to speak to you this evening."

"To me?"

"Yes."

This colloquy took place in a kind of antechamber, with a glazed door, which opened into a large room fronting on the street. Through the glass could be distinctly seen the lamp which lighted this room, the aspect of which, if not exactly palatial, was at least comfortable. Old curtains of yellow silk, faded in places, a few chairs covered with green Utrecht velvet, and an old yellow sofa, — such was the magnificence of this apartment.

The young girl abruptly opened the glazed door, and saw seated upon the sofa a man of good appearance, rather stout than thin, who with a handsome white hand was toying with a very elegant lace frill. Although she did not recognize him, it was the same man whom we have seen taking so much interest in her at Mesmer's.

She had not time to question him, for he began immediately, "I know all that you are going to ask, and will tell you without asking. You are Mademoiselle Oliva, are you not?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"A charming person, highly nervous, and much interested in the system of Monsieur Mesmer."

"I have just left there."

"All this, however, your beautiful eyes are saying plainly, does not explain what brings me here, and that is what you wish most particularly to know?"

"You are right, Monsieur."

"Will you not do me the favor to sit down, or I shall be obliged to get up also, and in that way we could not talk at our ease."

"Really, Monsieur, you have very extraordinary manners," replied the young woman, whom we shall henceforth call Mademoiselle Oliva, since she deigned to answer to that name.

"Mademoiselle, I saw you just now at Monsieur Mesmer's, and found you to be all I could wish."

"Monsieur!"

"Do not alarm yourself, Mademoiselle! I do not tell you that I found you charming, — that would seem like a declaration of love, and I have no such thing in my mind. Do not draw back, I beg, or you will oblige me to scream as if to a deaf man."

"What do you want, then?" said Oliva, innocently.

"I know," continued the stranger, "that you are accustomed to being called beautiful; but I, who also think that you are so, have other things to talk to you about."

"Really, Monsieur, the manner in which you speak to me —"

"Do not get angry before you have heard me. Is there any one that can overhear us?"

"No, Monsieur, no one. But still —"

"Then if no one can hear, we can converse at our ease. What do you say to a little partnership between us?"

"A partnership? You must know —"

"Do not misunderstand; I do not say 'liaison' — I say 'partnership.' I am not talking of love, but of business."

"What kind of business?" said Oliva, with astonishment and at the same time with curiosity.

"What do you do all day long?"

"Why —"

"Do not be afraid; I am not here to accuse you; tell me what you please."

"I do nothing, or, at least, as little as possible."

"You are indolent."

"Oh!"

"That is right."

"Ah, you say it is right?"

"Certainly. What is it to me if you are indolent? Do you like walking?"

"Very much."

"To see sights, and go to balls?"

"Exceedingly."

"To live well?"

"Above all things."

"If I gave you twenty-five louis a month, would you refuse me?"

"Monsieur!"

"My dear Mademoiselle Oliva, now you are beginning to doubt me again, and it was agreed that you were to listen quietly. I will say fifty louis if you like."

"I like fifty louis better than twenty-five; but what I

like better than either is to be able to choose my own lover."

"*Morbleu!* but I have already told you that I do not desire to be your lover. Set your mind at ease about that."

"And I say, *morbleu!* too; what am I to do to earn my fifty louis?"

"You must receive me at your house, and always be glad to see me. Walk out with me whenever I desire it, and come to me whenever I send for you."

"But I have a lover, Monsieur."

"And what then?"

"What do you mean by 'what then'?"

"Well, dismiss him, *pardieu!*"

"Oh, Beausire cannot be sent away like that."

"Do you wish me to help you?"

"No; I love him."

"Oh!"

"A little."

"That is just a little too much."

"I cannot help it."

"Then Beausire can stay."

"You are very obliging, Monsieur."

"Well, — but do my conditions suit you?"

"Yes; if you have told me all."

"Listen, my dear; I have said all I wish to say now."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor. But there is one thing you must understand."

"And that is —"

"That should it be necessary, you must really be my mistress."

"Ah, you see; there can never be any necessity for that, Monsieur."

"But you will need only to appear to be so."

"Oh, as to that, I agree to it."

"Then that is settled; and here is the first month's pay in advance."

He held out the money, and as she still seemed to hesitate a little, slipped it himself into her pocket without even grazing that round and lithe form which the great connoisseurs of Spain would not have disdained as he did.

Scarcely had he done so, when a knock at the door made Oliva spring to the window. "Good God!" she cried; "escape quickly, — here he is!"

"Who?"

"Beausire, — my lover. Be quick, Monsieur!"

"Ah, upon my word, so much the worse!"

"What do you mean by 'so much the worse'? Why, he will tear you in pieces."

"Bah!"

"Do you hear how he knocks?"

"Well, open the door. Why the devil do you not give him a pass-key?" And he sat down again on the sofa, saying to himself, "I must see this fellow, and judge what he is like."

The knocks became louder, and were mingled with oaths.

"Go, mother, and open the door," cried Oliva, in rage. "As for you, Monsieur, if any harm happens to you, it is your own fault."

"My own fault, as you say," observed the imperturbable unknown, without stirring from the sofa.

Oliva listened at the head of the stairs, with a palpitating heart.

CHAPTER XIX.

MONSIEUR BEAUSIRE.

OLIVA threw herself before the new-comer, a furious man, who with hands extended before him, pale face, and clothes in disorder, rushed into the room uttering hoarse imprecations.

"Beausire! Come, now, Beausire!" said she, in a tone that betrayed but little fear on the part of that courageous woman.

"Let me alone!" cried the man, roughly breaking loose from her. And lashing himself into greater fury, "Ah!" he said, "it is because there is a man here that the door was not opened! Ah! ah!"

The unknown remained on the sofa, calm and motionless. His attitude seemed to Beausire to betray indecision or even fright. He went up to him, grinding his teeth in a threatening manner. "I suppose you will answer me, Monsieur?" he said.

"What is it that you would like to have me tell you, my dear Monsieur Beausire?" replied the unknown.

"What are you doing here; and in the first place, who are you?"

"I am a quiet man at whom you are just now glaring terribly, and I was conversing with Madame, very properly."

"Certainly," murmured Oliva, "very properly."

"Hold your tongue!" shouted Beausire.

"There, there!" said the unknown, "don't be so rude to Madame, who has done no wrong; and if you are angry —"

"Yes, I am angry!"

"He must have lost at cards," said Oliva, in a low tone.

"Death of all the devils!" bawled Beausire, "I am cleaned out!"

"And you would not be sorry to clean out some one else?" said the unknown, laughing. "That is easily understood, dear Monsieur Beausire."

"No more of your impudent pleasantry! Do me the favor to get out of this."

"Oh, Monsieur Beausire, indulgence!"

"Death of all the devils of hell! get up and be off, or I will smash the sofa and everything on it!"

"You did not tell me, Mademoiselle, that Monsieur Beausire was subject to these fits. Good Lord! what ferocity!"

Beausire, exasperated, made a theatrical gesture, and in drawing his sword, described with his arms and the blade a circle at least ten feet in circumference.

"Once more," he said, "get up, or I will nail you to the back of the sofa."

"Really you could not be more disagreeable," replied the unknown, quietly, and with his left hand drawing from its sheath a small sword which he had hidden behind the sofa.

Oliva uttered piercing shrieks.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, be quiet," said the man, calmly, holding his sword in his hand without rising from his seat, — "be quiet, or two things will happen: in the first place, you will confuse Monsieur Beausire, and he will be run through by my sword; in the second place, the

watch will come up and carry you straight off to Saint Lazare."

Oliva exchanged her shrieks for a most expressive pantomime.

The scene that ensued was curious. Beausire, with his breast uncovered, half-drunk, and furious with rage, was making wild and unskilful passes at his adversary, who, still seated on the sofa, parried them with the utmost ease, laughing in a way to terrify Saint-Georges himself.

Beausire began to grow tired, and his anger had given place to an involuntary terror; for he reflected that if this man, who was now content to stand on the defensive, were to attack instead, he, Beausire, would be done for in a moment. Suddenly, however, the man by a skilful movement, sent Beausire's sword flying across the room; it went through an open window and fell into the street. Beausire did not know which way to look.

"Oh, Monsieur Beausire," said the unknown, "you should be more careful; if your sword should fall point downward on any one he would be a dead man."

Beausire, recalled to himself, ran down at his utmost speed to get his sword, and prevent an accident which would have got him into trouble with the police. Meanwhile Oliva, seizing the hand of the victor, said, "Oh, Monsieur, you are very brave, but Monsieur Beausire is treacherous, and you compromise me by remaining; when you are gone he will certainly beat me."

"Then I will remain."

"Oh, no; when he beats me I beat him in return, and I always get the best of it, because I am not obliged to use any restraint; so if you would but go, Monsieur —"

"But my pretty one, if I go now, I shall meet Monsieur Beausire on the stairs; probably we shall fight again, and as I shall not feel inclined to stand on the staircase, I

shall have to kill Monsieur Beausire or be killed by him."

"*Mon Dieu!* it is true; what a scandalous thing that would be!"

"Well, then, to avoid that, I will remain here."

"For the love of Heaven! go away; go up to the next story, and as soon as he returns, I will lock the door and take the key, and you can walk away while we fight it out."

"You are a charming girl; au revoir."

"Au revoir! until when?"

"To-night, if you please."

"To-night! are you mad?"

"*Pardi!* yes, to-night. Is there not a ball at the Opera to-night?"

"But it is now midnight."

"I know it, but what matters that to me?"

"We must have dominos."

"Beausire will procure them, — when you have beaten him."

"You are right," said Oliva, laughing.

"And here are ten louis to buy them with."

"Adieu! Adieu! Thanks!" And she pushed him toward the landing.

"Good! he is just closing the door below," said the unknown.

"There is only a latch and a bolt inside. Adieu! he is coming up."

"But if by chance he should beat you, how will you let me know?"

She reflected a moment. "You have a servant?"

"Yes."

"Send him here, and let him wait under the window till I let a note fall."

"I will; adieu;" and he went upstairs.

Nothing could be easier, the stairway was dark, and Oliva drowned the sound of his footsteps by calling loudly to Beausire, "Are you coming back, madman?" Beausire while coming up the stairs was reflecting seriously upon the moral and physical superiority of this intruder, so insolently established in a stranger's house. He at last reached the landing-place where Oliva was waiting for him. His sword was in its scabbard, and he was thinking up a speech.

Oliva seized him by the shoulders, pushed him into the antechamber and double-locked the door as she had promised.

The unknown, before leaving the house, could hear the beginning of the combat, in which might be distinguished by their sharp sound, like brass instruments in an orchestra, that kind of blows called vulgarly and by onomatopœia, slaps. With these slaps were mingled screams and reproaches.

"Indeed," said the unknown, moving away, "I would not have believed that this woman, so terrified just now at the return of the master, possessed such power of resistance."

The unknown lost no time in awaiting the conclusion of the scene. "There is too much heat in the beginning for it to last long," he said, and he turned into the Rue d'Anjou-Dauphine, where he found his carriage waiting. He spoke a word to one of his servants, who left the carriage and took up a position opposite Oliva's windows, hiding himself in the deep shadow of a small piazza overhanging the entrance of an old house.

In this position the servant could see, on the curtains of the window, two shadows which at first were greatly agitated, and gave him some idea of what was going on inside. The shadows became quieter by degrees, and at last only one remained.

CHAPTER XX.

GOLD.

We must now return to the interior of the room. Beausire was much surprised to see Oliva lock the door, and still more so, not to see his adversary. He began to feel triumphant, for if he was hiding from him, he must, he thought, be afraid of him. He therefore began to look for him, but Oliva forced him to stop and answer her questions.

Beausire, feeling himself ill-treated, began to talk loud.

Oliva, who knew that she was no longer to blame, as the cause of offence had disappeared, — "Quia corpus delicti aberat," as the text has it, — cried out so loud that to silence her Beausire put his hand to her mouth, or tried to do so.

But he was mistaken; Oliva understood differently the very persuasive and conciliatory movement of Beausire. To this hand coming so swiftly in the direction of her face, she opposed a hand as adroit, as quick, as lately had been the sword of the unknown. This hand parried carte and tierce, thrust forward, downward, and gave Beausire a slap in the face.

Beausire gave back, by a side thrust with the right hand, a blow which beat down both hands of Oliva and with a scandalous noise reddened the left cheek.

Oliva replied to this blow of Beausire with a projectile heavy and dangerous, a pitcher of earthen-ware; and Beausire's answer was the whirling of a cane, which broke

several cups, cut down a wax candle, and ended by hitting the shoulder of the young woman. She, furious, flew at him and seized him by the throat, and he, trying to free himself, tore her dress.

Then with a cry she pushed him from her with such force that he fell in the middle of the room. He got up foaming with rage.

But as the valor of an enemy is measured by the defence made, and as a good defence must always be respected, even by the conqueror, Beausire, who had conceived much respect for Oliva, took up the conversation where he had left it.

"You are a wicked creature, you ruin me," he said.

"On the contrary, it is you who ruin me."

"Oh, I ruin her! — her who has nothing!"

"Say that I have nothing now; say that you have eaten, and drunk, and played away all that I had."

"You reproach me with my poverty?"

"Yes; for it comes from your vices."

"I will correct all yours at a single blow."

"By beating me?" and Oliva brandished a very heavy pair of tongs, the sight of which made Beausire start back.

"Do not talk of vices; it only remained for you to take a lover."

"And what do you call all those wretches who sit by you in the gambling den, where you pass your days and nights?"

"I play to live."

"And nicely you succeed — we die of hunger; charming profession, on my word!"

"And you with yours are obliged to cry if you get your dress torn, because you have not the means to buy another; a fine profession, *pardieu!*"

"Better than yours!" cried Oliva, furious, "and there is the proof of it!" And putting her hand in her pocket, she drew out some gold and threw it across the room.

The louis began to roll upon their edges, and tumble their faces, some hiding under the furniture, others continuing their sonorous evolutions even under the doors. The others fell flat from fatigue, their faces shining like sparks of fire.

When Beausire heard this metallic ring upon the furniture and upon the floor, he was seized with a vertigo, or we ought rather to say, with remorse. "Louis! double louis!" cried he, astounded.

She took out some more, and threw them in his face.

"Oh," cried he, "Oliva has become rich!"

"This is the proceeds of my profession," cynically replied the creature, kicking vigorously both the gold which strewed the floor, and Beausire who was picking it up.

"Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen," counted he, joyfully.

"Miserable wretch!" muttered Oliva.

"Nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two."

"Coward!"

"Twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five."

"Villain!"

Beausire got up. "And so, Mademoiselle, you have been saving money, while you deprived me of necessaries. You let me go about in an old hat, darned stockings, and patched clothes, while you had all this money. Where does it come from? Why, from the sale of my furniture, when I joined my sad destiny to yours."

"Scoundrel!" murmured Oliva, looking at him with contempt, which did not disturb him.

"I pardon you, not your avarice, but your economy," he continued.

"You would have killed me just now," said Oliva.

"Just now I was right; now I should be wrong to do it."

"Why, if you please?"

"Because now you are a good housekeeper, and contribute to our expenses."

"You are a base wretch!"

"My little Oliva!"

"Give me back my money."

"Oh, my darling!"

"If you do not, I will pass your own sword through your body."

"Oliva!"

"It is either yes or no."

"It is no, Oliva; I will never consent to be run through the body."

"Do not stir, or I run you through. The money!"

"Give it to me."

"Ah, coward! ah, degraded creature! you beg, you solicit the fruits of my bad conduct! Ah, this is what is called a man! I have always despised you, — have despised you all, do you hear? — and more still him who gives than him who receives."

"He who can give is fortunate. I have also given you, Nicole," replied Beausire, gravely.

"Do not call me Nicole."

"Pardon, then, Oliva; but is it not true?"

"Fine presents, certainly, — some silver buckles, six louis d'or, two silk dresses, and three embroidered handkerchiefs."

"It is a great deal for a soldier."

"Hold your tongue! The buckles you stole from some one else; the louis d'or you borrowed and never returned; the silk dresses —"

"Oliva! Oliva!"

"Give me back my money."

"What shall I give you instead?"

"Double the quantity."

"Well," said the rogue, "I will go to the Rue de Bussy, and play with it, and bring you back, not the double, but the quintuple;" and he made two steps to the door.

She caught him by the skirt of his too tender coat.

"There," said he, "you have torn my coat."

"So much the better, you shall have a new one."

"Six louis! Oliva, six louis! Luckily, at the Rue de Bussy they are not particular about dress."

Oliva seized hold of the other coat-tail and tore it off. Beausire became furious.

"Death of all the devils!" he cried; "you will make me kill you at last. See how this vixen has undressed me. Now I cannot go out."

"On the contrary, you must go out immediately."

"Without a coat?"

"Put on your great-coat."

"All holes and patches."

"Then do not put it on, if you like that better; but you must go out."

"Never."

She took out of her pocket another handful of gold, and jingled it between her hands.

Beausire was almost wild; he kneeled at her feet and cried, "Order, and I will obey."

"Go quickly to the Capucin Magique, Rue de Seine, where they sell dominos for the ball, and buy me one complete, mask and all."

"Good."

"And one for yourself, black; but for me a white satin one, and I give you only twenty minutes to do it in."

"Are we going to the ball?"

"Yes if you are obedient."

"Oh, always, always!"

"Go, then, and show your zeal."

"I am going."

"What! are you not gone yet?"

"But the money?"

"You have twenty-five louis."

"What! I have twenty-five louis! And how do you make that out?"

"Why, those you picked up."

"Oh, Oliva, I thought you meant to give me those."

"You shall have more another time; but if I give you them now, you will stop and play. Go, and come back quickly."

"She is right," said he to himself; "that is just what I intended to do."

"Twenty-five minutes, do you hear?" cried Oliva.

"I obey."

As soon as he was gone Oliva wrote rapidly these words: "The peace is signed, the division made, and the ball decided on. At two o'clock we shall be at the Opera; I shall wear a white domino, with a blue ribbon on my left shoulder." Then rolling this round a bit of the broken vase, she went to the window and threw it out.

The valet picked it up, and made off immediately.

In less than half an hour Monsieur Beausire returned, followed by two journeymen tailors, who had brought, for the sum of eighteen louis, two beautiful dominos, such as could be found only at the Capucin-Magique, the establishment of a celebrated tailor, costumer of her Majesty and the maids of honor.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CARDINAL'S HOUSE.

We left Madame de La Motte at Monsieur Mesmer's door, watching the queen's carriage as it drove off. As soon as it was out of sight she went home for the purpose of procuring a domino and another mask, and at the same time to see if anything had occurred there while she was away. She had promised herself, for that happy night, some enjoyment after all the emotions of the day. She would go alone to the Opera and enjoy the charm of adventure. Therefore it was a disappointment to her to find a man waiting at her door with a note from the Cardinal de Rohan. She opened it and read as follows: —

"Madame la Comtesse, — You have doubtless not forgotten that we have business together; even if you have a short memory, I never forget what has pleased me. I shall have the honor to wait for you at a place to which my messenger will conduct you, if you please to come."

This letter was signed by a pastoral cross.

Jeanne, although somewhat annoyed, immediately reentered the coach, and told the messenger to get on the box with the coachman. Ten minutes sufficed to bring her to the entrance of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, where, in a hollow and completely hidden by great trees, was one of those pretty houses, built in the time of Louis XV., with all the taste of the sixteenth century, with the comfort of the eighteenth.

"Oh, oh! a pleasure-house," murmured the countess. "It is very natural on the part of Monsieur de Rohan, but very humiliating for a Valois. But, patience!"

That word, which resignation makes a sigh, or impatience an exclamation, betrayed the devouring ambition of her dreams and the mad cupidity of her desires. But as she crossed the threshold of the house she determined on her course of action.

She was led from room to room till she came to a small dining-room, fitted up with exquisite taste. There she found the cardinal waiting for her. He was looking over some pamphlets, but rose immediately on seeing her.

"Ah, here you are. Thanks, Madame la Comtesse," and he approached to kiss her hand; but she drew back with a reproachful and indignant air.

"What is the matter, Madame?" he asked.

"You are, doubtless, not accustomed, Monseigneur, to receive such a greeting from the women whom your Eminence is in the habit of summoning here."

"Oh, Madame!"

"We are in your private house, are we not, Monsieur?" continued she, looking disdainfully around her.

"But, Madame —"

"I had hoped, Monseigneur, that your Eminence would have deigned to remember in what rank I was born. I had hoped that you would have been pleased to consider that if God has made me poor, he has at least left me the pride of my race."

"Come, come, Countess, I took you for a woman of intellect."

"You call a woman of intellect, it appears, Monseigneur, every one who is indifferent to, and laughs at, everything, even dishonor. To these women — pardon me,

your Eminence — I have been in the habit of giving a different name."

"No, Countess, you deceive yourself; I call a woman of intellect one who listens when you speak to her, and does not speak before having listened."

"I listen, then."

"I had to speak to you of serious matters, Countess."

"Therefore you receive me in a dining-room."

"Why, would you have preferred my receiving you in a boudoir?"

"The distinction is delicate," said she.

"I think so, Countess."

"Then I am simply to sup with you?"

"Nothing else."

"I trust your Eminence is persuaded that I feel the honor as I ought."

"You are quizzing, Countess."

"No; I only laugh."

"You laugh?"

"Yes. Would you prefer to see me angry. You are difficult to please, Monseigneur."

"Oh, you are charming when you laugh, and I ask nothing better than to see you always doing so; but at this moment you are not laughing. Oh, no! there is anger in that smile which shows your beautiful teeth."

"Not the least in the world, Monseigneur; the dining-room reassured me."

"That is good."

"And I hope you will enjoy your supper."

"What! — that I shall enjoy my supper? And you?"

"Oh, I am not hungry."

"What, Madame, you refuse to give me a supper?"

"What do you say?"

"You drive me out?"

"I do not understand you, Monseigneur."

"Listen, dear Countess; if you were less in a passion I would tell you that it is useless to behave like this, — you cannot appear otherwise than charming; but as at each compliment I fear to be dismissed, I abstain."

"You fear to be dismissed? Really, I beg pardon of your Eminence, but you become unintelligible."

"What I say is, however, quite clear. The other day, when I came to see you, you complained that you were lodged unsuitably to your rank. That compelled me to shorten my visit; and besides it made you somewhat cold toward me. I thought, therefore, that to restore you to your proper place would be like restoring air to the bird whom the experimenter has placed under his air-pump."

"And then?" said the countess, anxiously, for she began to comprehend.

"Then, beautiful Countess, that you might receive me with pleasure, and that I, on my part, might visit you without compromising either you or myself — " He stopped and looked at her.

"Well?" she said.

"I hoped that you would deign to accept this small residence; you observe I do not call it a private house."

"Accept! you give me this house, Monseigneur?" said Jeanne, her heart beating with pride and eagerness.

"A very small gift, Countess; but if I had offered you more, you would have refused."

"Oh, Monseigneur, it is impossible for me to accept such a gift."

"Impossible, why? Do not say that word to me, for I do not believe in it. The house belongs to you; the keys are here on this silver plate. I treat you as if you were a conqueror; do you find any humiliation in this?"

"No, but —"

"Then accept."

"Monseigneur, I have told you —"

"How is this, Madame? You write to the ministers for a pension; you accept a hundred louis from an unknown lady —"

"Oh, Monseigneur, it is different. Who receives —"

"Who receives, obliges," said the cardinal, nobly. "Come, I have waited for you in your dining-room. I have not yet seen the boudoir, nor the drawing-room, nor the bed-rooms; but I suppose there are all these."

"Oh, Monseigneur, forgive me! You force me to confess that you are the most delicate of men;" and the countess, who had so long kept her feelings under control, blushed with pleasure at the thought that she would be able to say, "My house." But she perceived, by the appearance of the cardinal, that she had betrayed herself too freely. "Monseigneur," she said, drawing back a step, "I beg your Eminence to give me a supper."

The cardinal took off his cloak, which he had not yet removed, and entered on his duties as major-domo. The supper was speedily served. As the servants were coming through the antechamber Jeanne put on her mask.

"It is I who ought to wear a mask," said the cardinal, "for here you are at home, among your own servants. It is I who am the stranger."

Jeanne began to laugh, but retained her mask nevertheless; and in spite of her pleasure and surprise, which choked her, she did honor to the repast.

The cardinal, as we have already said on several occasions, was a man of a noble heart and of strong intelligence. A long-continued acquaintance with the most civilized courts of Europe, with courts governed by queens; familiarity with the society of women, who at

that period complicated, but also often decided, political questions; the experience transmitted to him, so to speak, by inheritance, and increased by personal observation, — all these advantages, so rare to-day, and already rare at that time, made the prince an extremely difficult man for rival diplomatists, or women who were his mistresses, to circumvent. And besides, his polished manners and dignified courtesy were a shield which nothing could penetrate.

The cardinal, therefore, considered himself very superior to Jeanne. That provincial, swollen with pretensions, who had been unable to conceal her avarice under her false pride, seemed to him an easy conquest, desirable, doubtless, by reason of her beauty, her wit, and a certain piquant charm which is especially seductive to men whose sensibilities have been dulled by experience. This time, perhaps, the cardinal, less penetrating than impenetrable, was in error; but Jeanne, beautiful as she was, inspired him with no distrust.

This was the ruin of that superior man. He not only made himself seem less than he was, — he made himself a pygmy. When once the struggle had begun, Jeanne, who was aware of her apparent inferiority, was careful to conceal her real superiority. She played the part of a country coquette, and made herself seem trivial and silly, so that her adversary, still confident in his strength, might be correspondingly feeble in his attacks.

The cardinal, who had observed all the signs of emotion which Jeanne had been unable to repress, thought her intoxicated by the present he had made her, — as indeed she was, for it was beyond her hopes, and even beyond her pretensions. What the cardinal overlooked was that the ambition and pride of a woman like Jeanne would soar to a height beyond his own. Jeanne's first intoxica-

tion was already somewhat abated by a succession of new desires.

"Come," said the cardinal, pouring some Cyprus wine into a small cup starred with gold, — "come, now that you have made a contract with me, do not be out of humor toward me, Countess."

"Out of humor toward you? Oh, no!"

"You will sometimes, then, receive me here without aversion?"

"I shall never be so ungrateful as to forget that here you are in your own house, Monseigneur."

"My house? Nonsense!"

"Yes, yours, — yours only."

"Ah, if you contradict me, beware!"

"Well, what will happen?"

"I shall impose on you other conditions."

"Ah, in your turn, beware!"

"Of what?"

"Of everything."

"Tell me."

"I am in my own house — "

"And — "

"And if I find your conditions unreasonable I shall call my servants."

The cardinal began to laugh.

"There, you see!" she said.

"I see nothing at all."

"Oh, yes! you see that you are making fun of me."

"Why do you say that?"

"You laugh — "

"And with reason, it seems to me."

"Yes, with reason, for you know that if I call my servants, they will not come."

"Oh, yes, they would, — the devil take me!"

"Fie, Monseigneur!"

"What, then, have I done?"

"You swore, Monseigneur."

"I am no longer a cardinal while I am here, Countess. I am simply your guest, — that is to say, in good luck;" and he laughed again.

"Come," said the countess to herself; "decidedly, he is a charming man!"

"By the way," said the cardinal, suddenly, as if something quite foreign to his thoughts had occurred to him, "what were you saying to me the other day of two sisters of charity, — two German ladies?"

"Of those two ladies with the portrait?" said Jeanne, who, having seen the queen, was ready with her parry and thrust.

"Yes, the ladies with the portrait."

"Monseigneur," said the countess, looking at him intently, "I am sure you know those ladies better than I do."

"I? Oh, Countess, you do me an injustice! Did you not express a desire to know who they were?"

"Certainly; it is natural to wish to know one's benefactors."

"Well, then, had I known who they were I should have told you."

"Monsieur le Cardinal, I tell you that you know those ladies."

"No."

"Repeat that 'no,' and I shall call you a liar!"

"And I shall take revenge for the insult."

"And how, if you please?"

"By kissing you."

"It is strange that the ambassador to the court of Vienna, the intimate friend of the Empress Maria Theresa,

should not recognize the portrait of his friend, unless, indeed, it were very unlike."

"What! Really, Countess, it was the portrait of Maria Theresa?"

"Oh, yes; pretend ignorance!"

"Well, then, suppose that I recognized the portrait,—what would you infer from that?"

"That on recognizing the portrait of Maria Theresa you must have some suspicion as to its owner."

"But why do you insist on my knowing that?" asked the cardinal, with some anxiety.

"Why, because ordinarily one finds the portrait of the mother only in the hands of—"

"Go on."

"Of the daughter."

"The queen!" cried the cardinal, with so truthful a tone of surprise that it duped even Jeanne. "Do you really think the queen came to see you?"

"And you did not suspect it?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no; how should I? I, who speak to you, am neither son, daughter, nor relation in any degree of Maria Theresa, yet I have a portrait of her about me at this moment. Look!" said he,—and he drew out a snuff-box and showed it to her. "If I, who am in no way related to the imperial house, carry about such a portrait, another might do the same, and yet not be of the august house of Austria."

Jeanne was silent; she had all the instincts of diplomacy, but was deficient in practice.

"Then, it is your opinion," he continued, "that you have had a visit from the queen, Marie Antoinette?"

"The queen and another lady."

"Madame de Polignac?"

"I do not know."

"Perhaps Madame de Lamballe?"

"A young lady, very beautiful and very serious."

"Oh, perhaps Mademoiselle de Tavernay."

"It is possible; I do not know her."

"Well, if her Majesty has really come to visit you, you are sure of her protection. It is a great step toward your fortune."

"I believe it, Monseigneur."

"And her Majesty was generous to you?"

"She gave me a hundred louis."

"And she is not rich, — especially at this moment."

"That doubles my gratitude."

"Did she show much interest in you?"

"Very great."

"Then all goes well," said the prelate, thoughtfully, and overlooking the protégé in thinking of the possible protectress; "there remains now but one thing for you to do."

"What is it?"

"To gain admission at Versailles."

The countess smiled.

"Ah, Countess, let us not deceive ourselves; that is not so easy."

She smiled again, more significantly than before.

"Really, you provincials," said the cardinal, "doubt nothing; because you have seen Versailles with doors which open, and stairs for ascending, you think any one may open those doors, and ascend those stairs. Have you seen the monsters of brass, of marble, and of lead, which adorn the park and the terraces?"

"Why, yes, Monseigneur."

"Griffins, gorgons, ghouls, and other ferocious creatures. There are hundreds of them. Well, you will find ten times as many wicked living animals between you and the favor of sovereigns."

"Your Eminence will aid me to pass through the ranks of these monsters."

"I will try, but it will be difficult. And if you pronounce my name, if you show your talisman, after two visits it will be useless to you."

"Happily, then, I am guarded by the immediate protection of the queen, and I shall enter Versailles with a good key."

"What key, Countess?"

"Ah, Monsieur le Cardinal, that is my secret, — or rather it is not; for if it were mine I should feel bound to tell it to my generous protector."

"There is, then, an obstacle, Countess?"

"Alas, yes, Monseigneur. It is not my secret, and I must keep it. Let it suffice you to know that to-morrow I shall go to Versailles; that I shall be received, and I have every reason to hope, well received."

The cardinal looked at her with wonder. "Ah, Countess," said he, laughing, "I shall see if you will get in."

"You will push your curiosity so far as to follow me."

"Exactly."

"Very well."

"Be careful what you do from to-morrow, for your honor is committed to your entrance at Versailles."

"Yes, and into the private apartments, Monseigneur."

"Really, Countess, you are a living enigma."

"One of those monsters who inhabit the park of Versailles?"

"Oh, you believe me a man of taste, do you not?"

"Certainly, Monseigneur."

"Well, here I am at your knees, and I take your hand and kiss it. Should I do that if I thought you a monster?"

"I beg you, Monseigneur, to remember," said Jeanne, coldly, "that I am neither a grisette nor an opera girl, — that I am my own mistress, except as belonging to my husband, and am equal in rank to any man in this kingdom. I will accept freely and spontaneously, when it shall please me, the man who shall have gained my affections. Therefore, Monseigneur, respect me a little, and in me the noble rank to which we both belong."

The cardinal rose. "I see," said he, "you wish me to love you seriously."

"I do not say that; but I wish to be able to love you. When that day comes — if it does come — you will easily find it out, believe me. If you do not, I will let you know it; for I am young enough, and attractive enough, not to mind making the first advances, nor to fear a repulse."

"Countess, if it depends upon me, you shall love me."

"We shall see."

"You have already a friendship for me; have you not?"

"More than that."

"Really? then we are at least half-way."

"Let us not measure the road, but go forward."

"Countess, you are a woman whom I should adore, if —" He stopped and sighed.

"Well," said she, in surprise, "if —"

"If you would permit it," the cardinal hastened to reply.

"Monseigneur, I will permit it, perhaps, when fortune shall have smiled on me sufficiently to persuade you to dispense with falling at my feet, and so prematurely kissing my hands."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes; when I shall be independent of your kindness

you will no longer suspect that I welcome your visits through sordid motives. Then you will have a higher opinion of me; I shall gain by it, and you will not lose."

"Then you forbid me to pay my court now?"

"Not at all; but there are other ways besides kneeling and kissing hands."

"Well, Countess, let us hear; what will you permit?"

"All that is compatible with my tastes, my duties —"

"Oh, that is vague indeed."

"Stop; I was going to add, and my caprices."

"I am lost!"

"You draw back?"

The cardinal was at that moment controlled less by his inward thought than by the charm of that provoking enchantress. "No," said he; "I do not draw back."

"Not before my duties?"

"Nor before your tastes and caprices."

"Well, then, I want a proof."

"Speak."

"I want to go to the ball at the Opera."

"Well, Countess, that only concerns yourself. Are you not free as air to go where you wish?"

"Ah, but you have not heard all. I want you to go with me."

"I, to the Opera, Countess?" said he, with a start of horror.

"See, then, how much your desire to please me is worth."

"A cardinal cannot go to a ball at the Opera, Countess. It is as if I proposed to you to go into a — public-house."

"Then a cardinal does not dance, now-a-days?"

"Oh, no!"

"But I have read that Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu danced a saraband."

"Yes; before Anne of Austria."

"Before a queen, that is true," said Jeanne, looking at him intently. "Perhaps you would do as much for a queen?"

The cardinal could not help blushing, dissembler as he was. Jeanne, either because she pitied his confusion or because for policy's sake she was unwilling to prolong it, hastened to add, —

"Is it not natural that I should feel hurt when, after all your protestations, you will not do as much for me as you would for a queen, — especially when I only ask you to go concealed in a domino and a mask; and when it would shorten by a gigantic step that road you were measuring a little while ago, — for I could not be too grateful to you."

The cardinal, pleased with being let off so easily, and rejoicing especially in the continuing victory which Jeanne's address allowed him to derive from every one of her caprices, seized the countess's hand and pressed it tenderly. "For you," said he, "everything, — even the impossible."

"Thanks, Monseigneur; you are really amiable. But now that you have consented, I will release you."

"No, no! he who does the work can alone claim the reward. Countess, I will attend you, but in a domino."

"We shall pass through the Rue Saint Denis, close to the Opera," said the Countess; "I will go, masked, into a store, buy a domino and a mask for you, and you can put them on in the carriage."

"Countess, that is a capital idea of yours."

"Oh, Monseigneur, your goodness covers me with confusion. But now I think of it, perhaps at the Hôtel Rohan you might find a domino more to your taste than the one I should buy."

"Now, Countess, that is unpardonable malice. Believe me, if I go to the Opera, I shall be as surprised to find myself there, as you were to find yourself supping *tête-à-tête* with a man not your husband."

Jeanne had nothing to reply to this. Soon a carriage without arms drove up; they both got in, and drove off at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME WORDS ABOUT THE OPERA.

THE Opera, that temple of pleasure at Paris, was burned in the month of June, 1781. Twenty persons had perished in the ruins; and as it was the second time within eighteen years that this had happened, it created a prejudice against the place where it then stood in the Palais Royal, and the king had ordered its removal to a less central spot. The place chosen was the Porte Saint Martin.

The king, vexed to see Paris deprived of its Opera, became as sorrowful as if the arrivals of grain had ceased, or bread had risen to more than seven sous the quartern loaf. It was melancholy to see the nobility, the army, and the citizens without their after-dinner amusement; and to see the promenades thronged with the unemployed divinities, from the chorus singers to the prima donnas.

To console the king, — and the queen too was somewhat interested, — Monsieur Lenoir, an architect, was introduced to their Majesties; he promised to do wonderful things. The worthy man had new devices, including a system of ventilation so perfect that even in case of fire no one could be smothered. He would make eight doors for exit, besides five large windows, placed so low that any one could jump out of them without danger of worse harm than a sprained ankle. To replace the beautiful hall built by Moreau he was to erect a building, with

ninety-six feet of frontage toward the boulevard, ornamented with eight caryatides, on pillars forming three entrance doors; with eight columns resting on the foundation, a bas-relief above the capitals, and a gallery with three windows. The stage was to be thirty-six feet wide; the theatre, seventy-two feet deep, and eighty-four across from one wall to the other. There were to be ante-rooms adorned with mirrors, and decorated in a plain and noble style; under the hall an immense reservoir was to be provided, with two series of pumps, to the service of which twenty soldiers of the guards were to be detailed. And to crown all, the architect asked for only seventy-five days and nights to get the building ready for the reception of the public.

This appeared to all a mere gasconade, and was much laughed at. The king, however, went over the estimates with Monsieur Lenoir, and concluded the agreement with him.

Monsieur Lenoir applied himself to the work, and fulfilled his promise; the hall was finished at the appointed time.

Then the public, naturally distrustful, reflected that the structure was built of wood, and that having been built so rapidly, it could not be very stable; so that after longing for its erection, and watching with admiration the daily progress of the work, they were unwilling to enter it, when at last it was completed. A few foolhardy persons took tickets for the performance of "Adèle de Ponthieu," the music by Piccini, but at the same time made their wills.

On seeing this, the architect in his despair had recourse to the king, who gave him an idea.

"The cowards in France," said the king, "are those who have money. They might be willing to give you an

income of ten thousand francs, or to be stifled in a crowd; but they will not take the risk of being crushed under falling ceilings. Give them no further attention; address yourself to the worthy citizens who cannot pay for admission. The queen has presented me with a dauphin, and the city is wild with joy. Have it announced that to celebrate the birth of my son, the Opera will be thrown open to the public for a gratuitous performance. If twenty-five hundred persons crowded together — that is an aggregate of three hundred thousand pounds — do not sufficiently test the solidity of the structure, ask those good people to jump about a little; you know Monsieur Lenoir, that weight is quintupled in a fall of four inches. Your twenty-five hundred spectators will weigh fifteen hundred thousand pounds if you make them dance; give a ball, then, after the spectacle."

"Sire, I thank you," said the architect.

"But in the first place, reflect; that crowd will be heavy."

"Sire, I am sure of my work, and I shall go to the ball."

"And I," replied the king, "will attend the second representation."

The architect followed the king's advice. They played "Adèle de Ponthieu" before three thousand plebeians, who applauded louder than kings. They were willing enough to dance after the performance, and to enjoy themselves. Their weight was increased tenfold instead of fivefold. The structure stood unshaken.

Had there been anything to fear it would have been at the subsequent performances, when the timorous nobles crowded the hall, — that hall to which, three years after its opening, Monsieur le Cardinal de Rohan and Madame de La Motte were going to attend a ball.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OPERA-BALL.

THE ball was at its height when the Cardinal de Rohan and Madame de La Motte glided in stealthily — the prelate, at least — among thousands of dominos and masks of every kind. They were soon lost in the crowd. Two persons had taken refuge from the pressure under the queen's box; one of them wore a white domino and the other a black one. They were talking with great animation. "I tell you, Oliva," said the black domino, "that I am sure you are expecting some one. Your head is no longer a head, but a weathercock, and turns round to look after every new-comer."

"Well! is it astonishing that I should look at the people, when that is what I came here for?"

"Oh, that is what you came for?"

"Well, Monsieur; and for what do people generally come to the Opera?"

"A thousand things."

"Men, perhaps, but women only for one, — to see and be seen by as many persons as possible. You have brought me to the Opera-ball. I am here; you must be resigned."

"Mademoiselle Oliva!"

"Oh, do not speak in that big voice. You know it does not frighten me; and above all, do not call me by name. You know there is nothing in worse taste than to call people by name at the Opera-ball."

The black domino made an angry gesture; it was interrupted by a blue domino who approached them.

"Come, Monsieur," said he, "let Madame amuse herself. It is not mid-Lent every day, and it is not at every mid-Lent that one comes to the Opera-ball."

"Mind your own business," replied the black domino, rudely.

"Eh, Monsieur! learn once for all," said the blue domino, "that a little courtesy is never out of place."

"I do not know you, and why the devil should I have anything to do with you?"

"No; you do not know me, but I know you, Monsieur de Beausire."

At hearing his name thus pronounced, the black domino trembled, and betrayed his agitation by the shaking of his silken hood.

"Oh, do not be afraid, Monsieur de Beausire," continued the mask; "I am not what you think I am."

"Eh, *pardieu!* what do I think you are? Are you not content with guessing names? Must you pretend also to guess what one thinks?"

"Why not?"

"Then, tell me what I thought. I have never seen a sorcerer, and shall enjoy meeting one."

"Oh, what you ask is not difficult enough to entitle me to that name, which you seem to grant so readily."

"Tell me at all events."

"Well, then, you took me for an agent of Monsieur de Crosne."

"Monsieur de Crosne!" he repeated.

"Oh, yes; you do not know him, *pardieu!* Monsieur de Crosne, the lieutenant of police."

"Monsieur!"

"Softly, Monsieur de Beausire, you really look as if you were feeling for your sword."

"Certainly I was feeling for it."

"Good Heavens! what a warlike disposition; but I think, dear Monsieur Beausire, you left your sword at home, and you did well. But to speak of something else, will you let me have Madame's arm for a little while?"

"Madame's arm?"

"Yes, Monsieur; that is not uncommon, I believe, at a ball at the Opera, — or have I but just arrived from the Indies?"

"Certainly not, when it is agreeable to the lady's cavalier."

"It suffices sometimes, dear Monsieur Beausire, that it is agreeable to the lady."

"Do you ask it for a long time?"

"Really, Monsieur Beausire, you are too curious. Perhaps for ten minutes, perhaps for an hour, perhaps for all the evening."

"You are laughing at me, Monsieur."

"Dear Monsieur, answer, Yes or No. Yes or no, will you give me Madame's arm?"

"No."

"Come, come, do not be ill-tempered, — you, who were so pleasant a little while ago."

"A little while ago?"

"Yes; at the Rue Dauphine."

"Rue Dauphine!" exclaimed Beausire, stupefied.

Oliva laughed.

"Hold your tongue, Madame," said the black domino, grinding his teeth. Then to the stranger, "I do not understand you. Play your game honestly, if you can."

"My dear Monsieur, it seems to me that nothing can be more honest than the truth. Am I not right, Mademoiselle Oliva?"

"What, you know me also?" said she.

"Did not Monsieur just speak your name aloud?"

"And the truth," continued Beausire, — "the truth is —"

"That you were on the point of killing this poor lady, but stopped at the sound of twenty louis."

"Enough, Monsieur!"

"Well, then, if you have had enough, give me Madame's arm."

"Oh, I see; you and she have an understanding together."

"I swear to you it is not so."

"How can any one say such a thing?" cried Oliva.

"And if it were so," said the stranger, "it would be only for your benefit."

"For my benefit?"

"Certainly."

"When one asserts a thing he proves it," said Beausire, cavalierly.

"Willingly."

"Ah! I should be curious to know —"

"I will prove to you that your presence here is as injurious to you as your absence would be profitable. You are a member of a certain academy, are you not?"

"I?"

"Oh, do not get angry, dear Monsieur de Beausire. I am not speaking of the French Academy."

"Academy — academy —" muttered Beausire.

"In the Rue du Pot-de-Fer, in the second story, is it not, my dear Monsieur de Beausire?"

"Hush!" said Beausire.

The blue domino drew out his watch, which was studded with diamonds that made Beausire's eyes water to look at them. "Well!" continued he, "in a quarter of an hour they are going to discuss there a little project, by which they hope to secure two million francs among

the twelve members, of whom you are one, Monsieur de Beausire."

"And you must be another; if you are not —"

"Pray go on."

"A member of the police."

"Oh, Monsieur de Beausire, I thought you had more sense; but I am sorry to see that you are a fool. If I were of the police I should have taken you long ago, for some little affairs less honorable than this speculation of two millions which they are going to discuss in the academy in a few minutes."

Beausire reflected a moment.

"The devil! You must be right." Then still reflecting, "So, Monsieur, you wish to send me to the Rue du Pot-de-Fer; but I know why, — that I may be arrested there; I am not such a fool."

"More foolishness. If I had the power to do as you say; the power, greater still, of guessing what is going on at your academy, — I should have had you arrested at once, and we should have been rid of you, Madame and I; but on the contrary, my motto is 'with gentleness and persuasion,' dear Monsieur de Beausire."

"Oh, I know now," said Beausire, "you are the man who was on the sofa two hours ago, are you not?"

"What sofa?" inquired the blue domino, whose little finger Oliva pinched slightly; "the only sofa I know of is that of Monsieur Crébillon, junior."

"Never mind; you have induced me to go, and if you are sending a worthy man into harm, you will pay for it some day."

"Be tranquil," said the blue domino, laughing at this epithet "worthy;" "by sending you there, I give you one hundred thousand francs at least, for you know the rule of this society is that whoever is absent loses his share."

"Well, then, good-by!" said Beausire, and vanished.

The blue domino took possession of Oliva's arm, left at liberty by Beausire.

"Now!" said she, "I have let you manage poor Beausire at your ease, but I warn you, you will not find me, who know you, so easy to talk over; therefore, find something pretty to say to me, or—"

"I know nothing prettier in the world than your own history, dear Mademoiselle Nicole;" said he, pressing the pretty round arm of the little woman, who uttered a low cry at hearing this name, which the mask whispered in her ear, but recovering herself with marvellous quickness said:

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* what a name! Is it I whom you call Nicole? If so, you are shipwrecked on leaving port; you founder on the first rock, for that is not my name."

"At present I know that you call yourself Oliva. Nicole was too provincial. I know that there are two women in you,—Oliva and Nicole. We will talk afterward of Oliva; at present I want to speak of Nicole. Have you forgotten the time when you answered to that name? I do not believe it, my dear child; for the name that one bears as a young girl is ever the one enshrined in the heart, although one may have been forced to take another to hide the first. Poor Oliva! Happy Nicole!"

At that moment a swarm of maskers, pushing by them, obliged Oliva to cling closely to her companion to keep from being swept away.

"See," he said, "all this motley crowd. See how these groups form and separate, some with joyous laughter, and others with reproaches. All these people have, perhaps, as many names as you; and I might astonish many of them by speaking to them names which they remember themselves, but think forgotten by all others."

"You said 'Poor Oliva!' Do you, then, think that I am not happy?"

"It would be difficult to be happy with a man like Beausire."

Oliva sighed and said, "Indeed, I am not."

"You love him, however?"

"Oh, a little!"

"If you do not love him much, leave him."

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I should no sooner have done so than I should regret it."

"Do you think so?"

"I am afraid I should."

"What could you have to regret in a drunkard, a gambler, a man who beats you, and a blackleg who will one day come to the gallows."

"You would not understand me if I told you."

"Try."

"I should regret the excitement with which he surrounds me."

"I ought to have guessed it; that comes of passing your youth with such silent people."

"You knew about my youth?"

"Perfectly."

"Ah, my dear Monsieur!" said Oliva, laughing, and shaking her head with an air of distrust.

"You doubt it?"

"Really, I do."

"Then we will talk a little about your youth, Mademoiselle Nicole."

"Very well; but I warn you, I will answer you nothing."

"I do not wish it. I do not mean your childhood. I

begin at the time when you first perceived that you had a heart capable of love."

"Love for whom?"

"For Gilbert."

At this word, this name, a shudder ran through her whole body, and the blue domino felt her trembling on his arm. "Ah, my God!" she cried, "how do you know?" and she darted through her mask, with an indescribable emotion, a searching glance at the blue domino. Then with a sigh, she said, "Oh, Monsieur! you have pronounced a name indeed fertile in recollections. You knew Gilbert?"

"Yes, since I speak to you of him."

"Alas!"

"A charming lad, upon my word. You loved him?"

"He was handsome. No, perhaps not; but I thought him so. He was full of intelligence, my equal in birth; but Gilbert thought no woman his equal."

"Not even —"

"Not even who?"

"Not even Mademoiselle de Ta——"

"Oh, I know whom you mean, Monsieur! You are well informed. Yes, Gilbert loved higher than the poor Nicole. You are possessed of terrible secrets, Monsieur! Tell me, if you can," she continued, looking earnestly at him, "what has become of him?"

"You should know better than any one."

"Why, in Heaven's name?"

"Because, if he followed you from Taverney to Paris, you followed him from Paris to Trianon."

"Yes, that is true; but that is ten years ago, and I wish to know what has happened since the time when I ran away, and since he disappeared. Oh, how much can happen in ten years!"

Her companion looked at her in silence.

"I beg of you," persisted Nicole, almost supplicatingly, "tell me what has become of Gilbert! You turn away your head, and are silent. Perhaps the remembrances pain you."

The blue domino remained with his head bowed down, as if burdened by the weight of his recollections.

"When Gilbert loved Mademoiselle de Taverney —" continued Nicole.

"Speak lower when you mention names. Have you not noticed that I do not speak them?"

"When he loved her so much that every tree at Trianon was witness to his love —"

"You loved him no longer, then?"

"On the contrary, I loved him more than ever; and this love was my ruin. I am beautiful, proud, and when I please, insolent, and would allow my head to be cut off rather than confess myself despised."

"You have a heart, Nicole?"

"I had then," she said, sighing.

"This conversation makes you sad?"

"No; it does me good to speak of my youth. It is with life as with rivers; the most turbid stream has a pure source. Go on, and pay no attention to any poor, stray sigh which may issue from my breast."

"Oh," said the blue domino, with a gentle nod, which betrayed a smile hidden under the mask, "I know of you, of Gilbert, and another person, my poor child, all that you can possibly know yourself."

"Then," cried Oliva, "tell me why Gilbert fled from Trianon; and if you tell me —"

"You will be convinced? Well, I will not tell you, and you will be more thoroughly convinced still."

"How can that be?"

"In asking me why Gilbert left Trianon, you do not wish me to confirm a suspicion, but to tell you something which you do not know."

"That is true."

Then shuddering more violently than she had yet done, she seized both his hands in hers, "My God!" said she, "my God!"

"Well, what does this mean?"

Nicole appeared to recover herself, and to dismiss the idea which had produced this demonstration.

"Nothing," she said.

"Yes, you wished to ask me something."

"Yes; tell me frankly what has become of Gilbert?"

"Have you not heard that he was dead?"

"Yes; but —"

"Well, he is dead."

"Dead!" said Nicole, with an air of doubt. Then shuddering as before, "For mercy's sake, Monsieur, grant me one favor!"

"Two, ten, as many as you like, my dear Nicole."

"I saw you two hours ago, — for it was you, was it not?"

"Certainly."

"You did not, then, try to disguise yourself?"

"Not at all; on the contrary, I did all I could to make you see me."

"Oh, mad, mad woman that I am, — I who looked at you so much! Mad, mad, stupid woman, — only a woman! as Gilbert said."

"Well, now, spare your beautiful hair. Spare yourself."

"No; I wish to punish myself for having looked at you without seeing you."

"I do not understand."

"Do you know what I am going to ask of you?"

"No."

"Take off your mask."

"Here? Impossible!"

"Oh, you cannot fear being seen by others! Here, behind this column, you will be quite hidden, except from me. You fear that I should recognize you."

"Me!"

"And that I should cry, 'It is you; it is Gilbert!'"

"You did well to say, 'Mad! mad!'"

"Take off your mask."

"Yes, on one condition, — that you will take off yours if I ask it."

"I will take it off. If I do not, you may tear it off."

The blue domino yielded to Nicole's request. He went into the dark corner pointed out by her, and taking off his mask placed himself before Oliva, who looked earnestly at him for a whole minute.

"Alas, no!" she said, stamping her feet, and wounding the palms of her hands with her finger-nails. "Alas, it is not Gilbert!"

"And who am I?"

"Oh, I do not care, since you are not he!"

"And if it had been Gilbert?" said he, as he put on his mask again.

"Ah, if it had been!" she cried, passionately, "and he had said to me, 'Nicole, do you remember Taverney-Maison-Rouge?' oh, then —"

"Then?"

"There would have been, for me, no longer a Beausire in the world."

"But I have told you, my dear child, that Gilbert is dead."

"Ah, perhaps, then, it is for the best!" said Oliva, with a sigh.

"Yes; he would never have loved you, beautiful as you are."

"Do you, then, think he despised me?"

"No; he feared you, rather."

"That is possible. I was something like him; and he knew himself so well that I made him afraid."

"Then, as you said just now, it is better that he is dead."

"Do not repeat my words; in your mouth they hurt me. Why is it better that he is dead? Speak!"

"Because to-day, Mademoiselle Oliva, — you observe that I abandon Nicole, — because to-day, my dear Oliva, you have before you a future, happy, rich, and brilliant."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes; if you will resolve to do everything to attain the end I promise you."

"You may rest easy on that score."

"But you must give up sighing, as you were just now."

"Very well! I sighed for Gilbert; and as he is dead, and there are not two Gilberts in the world, I sigh no more."

"Gilbert was young then; he had the faults and good qualities of youth. But now — "

"Gilbert is not now older than he was ten years ago."

"No, undoubtedly, since he is dead."

"You see, then, he is dead; the Gilberts do not grow old, — they die."

"Oh," cried the unknown, "O Youth! O Courage! O Beauty! — eternal springs of love, heroism, and devotion, — he who loses you loses life itself. Youth is paradise, heaven, everything. What God bestows upon us afterward is but a sad compensation for the loss of our youth. The more generous he has been to a man in his youth, the greater should be the compensation when that

youth has fled. But nothing can replace, great God! the treasures which that youth lavished on the man."

"Gilbert would have thought what you have so eloquently uttered," said Oliva. "But enough of this subject."

"Yes; we will speak of yourself. Why did you run away with Beausire?"

"Because I wished to leave Trianon, and I was obliged to go with some one. I could no longer remain after having been rejected by Gilbert."

"Ten years of fidelity through pride," said the blue domino. "Oh, how dearly have you paid for that vanity!"

Oliva laughed.

"Oh, I know what you are laughing at! You laugh because a man who pretends to know everything accuses you of having been ten years faithful, when you think you have not exposed yourself to that ridiculous reproach. However, I know all about you. I know that you went to Portugal with Beausire, where you remained two years; that you then left him, and went to the Indies with the captain of a frigate, who hid you in his cabin, and who left you at Chandernagor when he returned to Europe. I know that you had two million rupees to spend in the house of a nabob who kept you shut up, and that you escaped through the window on the shoulders of a slave. You were then rich, for you had carried away two beautiful pearl bracelets, two diamonds, and three large rubies. You came back to France, and on landing at Brest your evil genius made you encounter Beausire on the quay, who almost fainted on recognizing you, bronzed and emaciated as you were on your return, poor exile!"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" cried Oliva, "who are you, then, who know all this?"

"I know, further, that Beausire carried you off again, persuaded you that he loved you, sold your jewels, and reduced you to poverty. Still you say you love him; and as love is the source of all happiness, of course you must be the happiest woman in the world."

Oliva hung her head, and covered her eyes with her hands; but two large tears might be seen forcing their way through her fingers, — liquid pearls, more precious, perhaps, than those in her bracelets, but which no one, alas! would have wished to purchase of Beausire.

"And this woman," at last she said, "so proud and so happy, you have bought this evening for fifty louis."

"I know it is too little, Madame," said the unknown, with that exquisite grace and perfect courtesy which never leaves the gentleman, even when addressing the lowest class of courtesans.

"No; on the contrary, I am surprised that a woman like me should be worth so much."

"You are worth much more than that, as I will show you. Oh, do not answer, for you do not understand; and besides," added the unknown, leaning toward her.

"And besides?"

"Just now I want all my attention."

"Then I will be silent."

"No; talk, on the contrary, — of anything, it does not matter what, so that we seem occupied."

"Be it so; but you are a very strange man."

"Take hold of my arm, and let us walk."

They walked on among the various groups, Oliva attracting the gaze of every connoisseur to her fine figure, elegantly shaped head, and flexible neck which her domino could not conceal; for in those days at the Opera-ball the passers-by followed the movements of a woman with as

much curiosity as in our days the lovers of horse-flesh watch the paces of a fine horse.

At the end of some moments Oliva ventured to ask a question.

"Silence!" said the unknown; "or rather, talk as much as you like, only do not ask questions at present, for I cannot answer now. When you speak, disguise your voice, hold your head up, and scratch your neck with your fan."

She obeyed. In a moment they passed a highly perfumed group, in the centre of which a very elegant-looking man was talking fast to three companions, who were listening respectfully.

"Who is that young man in that beautiful gray domino?" asked Oliva.

"Monsieur le Comte d'Artois," replied the unknown; "but do not speak just now, for mercy's sake!"

At this moment, when Oliva, astounded at the high-sounding name pronounced by her companion, stepped to one side to get a better view of its owner, two other dominos passed them and took refuge from the crowd in a place under the boxes, where there were no benches.

"Lean on this pillar, Countess," said one of them in a low voice, which was overheard by the blue domino, who started at its sound.

Almost at the same moment a yellow domino, whose bold manner revealed the useful man rather than the agreeable courtier, came up to the blue domino and said, "It is he."

"Very good," replied the other, dismissing the yellow domino by a gesture.

"Now, then," said Oliva's companion, turning to her; "we will begin to enjoy ourselves a little."

"I hope so, for you have twice made me sad, — first by

taking away Beausire, who always makes me laugh, and then by speaking of Gilbert, who has made me weep so many times."

"I will be both Gilbert and Beausire to you," said the unknown, gravely.

"Oh!" sighed Oliva.

"I do not ask you to love me, remember; I only ask you to accept the life I offer you, — that is, the accomplishment of all your fancies, provided you occasionally help me with mine. Just now I have one."

"What is it?"

"That black domino is a German of my acquaintance who refused to come to the ball with me, under the pretext of a headache."

"And to whom you also said that you would not come."

"Precisely."

"He has a lady with him?"

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

"I do not know; we will approach them. I will pretend that you are a German; you must not speak, lest he should recognize you by your accent as a native Parisian."

"Very well. And you will mystify him?"

"Oh, I will answer for that. Now, pretend to point him out to me with the end of your fan."

"Like that?"

"Yes, very well; now whisper to me."

Oliva obeyed with a docility and intelligence which charmed her companion.

The black domino, who had his back turned to them, did not see all this; but his companion did. "Take care, Monseigneur," said she; "there are two masks watching us."

"Oh, do not be afraid, Countess, they cannot recognize us. Do not mind them; but let me assure you that never form was so enchanting as yours, never eyes so brilliant; permit me to tell you — "

"All that one can say under the mask."

"No, Countess, all that one can say under — "

"Do not finish; you will condemn yourself. And besides, — danger greater still, — our spies would hear."

"Two spies!" cried the cardinal, with agitation.

"Yes, they have made up their minds to come to us."

"Disguise your voice, Countess, if they make you speak."

"And you, yours, Monseigneur."

Oliva and her blue domino indeed approached; the latter came up to the cardinal, and said, "Mask — "

"What do you want?" said the cardinal, in a voice as unlike his natural one as he could make it."

"The lady who accompanies me desires me to ask you some questions," replied the blue domino.

"Ask quickly," said Monsieur de Rohan.

"And let them be very indiscreet," said Madame de La Motte.

"So indiscreet that you must not hear them," replied the blue domino, and he pretended to whisper to Oliva, who made a sign in answer; then in irreproachable German, he said to the cardinal, "Monseigneur, are you in love with the lady who accompanies you?"

The cardinal trembled, "Did you say Monseigneur?" he asked.

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"You are mistaken, then; I am not the person you think."

"Oh, Monsieur le Cardinal! do not deny it; it is use-

less. If even I did not know you, the lady who accompanies me assures me she knows you perfectly." And he again whispered to Oliva, "Make a sign for yes. Do so every time I press your arm."

She made the sign.

"You astonish me," said the cardinal, completely taken a-back; "who is this lady?"

"Oh, Monseigneur! I thought you would have already recognized her. She knew you at once. It is true that jealousy —"

"Madame is jealous of me?" cried the cardinal.

"We do not say that," replied the unknown, rather haughtily.

"What are you talking about?" asked Madame de La Motte, who did not like this conversation in German which she could not understand.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!"

Madame de La Motte stamped her foot, impatiently.

"Madame," said the cardinal to Oliva, "one word from you and I promise to recognize you instantly."

Monsieur de Rohan had spoken German; Oliva did not understand a single word, and leaned toward the blue domino.

"Do not speak, Madame, I conjure you," said he.

All this mystery piqued the curiosity of the cardinal.

"One single German word," he said, "could not much compromise Madame."

The blue domino, who feigned to have received orders from Oliva, replied immediately, "Monsieur le Cardinal, these are Madame's words: 'He whose thoughts are not continually on the alert, he whose imagination does not perpetually bring before him the presence of the loved one, does not love, however much he may pretend that he does.'"

The cardinal seemed struck by the sentiment expressed in these words. His whole attitude evinced in the highest degree surprise, respect, and exalted devotion; then his arms fell at his sides.

"It is impossible!" he murmured in French.

"What is impossible?" asked Madame de La Motte, who seized eagerly on these few words she could understand.

"Nothing, Madame, nothing."

"Really, Cardinal, you are making me play but a sorry part," said she, angrily.

The cardinal did not even seem to notice her anger, so great was his preoccupation with the German lady.

"Madame," said he to her, "these words that your companion has repeated to me in your name are some German lines which I have read in a house which is perhaps known to you."

The blue domino pressed Oliva's arm, who thereupon bowed assent.

The cardinal shuddered. "That house," said he, hesitatingly, "is it not called 'Schoenbrunn'?"

"Yes," nodded Oliva.

"They were written on a table of cherry-wood, with a gold bodkin, by an august hand?"

"Yes," bowed Oliva, again.

The cardinal stopped, tottered, and leaned against a pillar for support.

Madame de La Motte stood by, watching this strange scene.

Then the cardinal, touching the blue domino, said, "This is the conclusion of the quotation: 'But he who sees everywhere the beloved object, who recognizes her by a flower, by a perfume, even through the thickest veils, he can still be silent; his voice is in his heart, and to be

understood by one other heart is sufficient for his happiness.'"

"Oh, they are speaking German here," said a young voice from an approaching group. "Let us listen. Do you speak German, Marshal?"

"No, Monseigneur."

"But you do, Charny?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"Here is Monsieur le Comte d'Artois," said Oliva, softly, to her companion.

At this moment the orchestra began a noisy prelude, and in the commotion caused by the dancers in hurrying to their places, the new-comer ran against the blue domino.

"Take care, gentlemen," said he, with a tone of authority.

"Monsieur," replied the prince, who continued masked, "the crowd urges us forward; your pardon, ladies."

At this instant some invisible hand pulled Oliva's hood from behind, her mask fell, and for a moment her features were visible. The blue domino uttered a cry of affected anxiety; Oliva a cry of alarm. Three or four cries of surprise responded to this exclamation.

The cardinal nearly fainted, and Madame de La Motte supported him. The pressure of the crowd separated the Comte d'Artois and his party from them. Then the blue domino approached the cardinal and said, "This indeed is an irreparable misfortune; this lady's honor is at your mercy."

"Oh, Monsieur, Monsieur!" murmured Prince Louis, bowing; and he passed over his forehead, streaming with perspiration, a handkerchief which trembled in his hand.

"Let us go quickly," said the blue domino to Oliva; and they moved away.

"Now I know," said Madame de La Motte to herself, "what it was the cardinal thought to be impossible; he took this woman for the queen. But what an effect it has had on him! Another observation to be retained."

"Would you like to leave the ball, Countess?" asked Monsieur de Rohan, in a feeble voice.

"As you please, Monseigneur," replied Jeanne.

"I do not find much interest here; do you?"

"None at all."

They pushed their way through the crowd. The cardinal, who was tall, looked all around him trying to catch another glimpse of the vision which had disappeared; but from that moment blue, red, yellow, green, and gray dominos whirled before his eyes in the luminous vapor like the varied colors of a prism. Everything at a distance was blue to the eyes of the unfortunate prince, but nothing near him was of that color. In this state he regained the carriage which awaited him and his companion. They started on their return, and for five minutes the cardinal did not utter a word.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAPPHO.

Madame de La Motte, who never forgot herself, roused the prelate from his revery. "Where is this carriage taking me, Cardinal?" she said.

"Back to your own house, Countess."

"My house! — in the faubourg?"

"Yes, Countess; a very small house to contain so many charms!" and saying this, the cardinal took one of her hands and kissed it gallantly.

The carriage stopped before the little house where so many charms were to try to find room. Jeanne alighted, and the cardinal was preparing to follow her.

"It is not worth the trouble, Monseigneur," whispered this female demon.

"What, not worth the trouble to spend a few hours with you, Countess?"

"And sleep, Monseigneur," said Jeanne.

"I believe there are several sleeping rooms in your house, Countess."

"For me, yes; but for you —"

"None for me?"

"Not yet," said she, with an air so gracious and so provoking that the refusal was equal to a promise.

"Adieu, then," replied the cardinal, so stimulated by the play in hand that for a moment he forgot the scene at the ball.

"Au revoir, Monseigneur."

"Well, I like it better so," said he, as the carriage drove off.

Jeanne entered her new house alone. Six lackeys waited for her in the hall, and she looked at them with that air of quiet superiority which fortune does not bestow upon all the rich.

"Where are my attendants?" she said.

One of the men advanced respectfully. "Two women wait for Madame in her room," said he.

"Call them."

The valet obeyed. A few minutes later two women entered.

"Where do you usually sleep?" said Jeanne.

"We have no place as yet," said one of them; "we can sleep wherever Madame pleases."

"Where are the keys?"

"Here, Madame."

"Well, for this night you will sleep out of the house."

The women looked at her in surprise.

"You have some place to go to?" said Jeanne.

"Certainly, Madame; but it is late. Still, if Madame wishes to be alone —"

"These men can accompany you," she continued, dismissing the valets also, who seemed rather pleased.

"When shall we return?" asked one of the women, timidly.

"To-morrow at noon."

The six valets and the two women looked at each other for a moment, and then, controlled by Jeanne's commanding appearance, they moved toward the door. Jeanne accompanied them, but before closing the door on them asked, "Is any one else in the house?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no, Madame; there will be no one. It is impossible that Madame should remain here thus aban-

doned. Let one of the women stay, — in the servants' hall, in the kitchen, anywhere; but let some one stay and watch."

"I have no need of any one."

"But a fire might break out, — Madame might be ill."

"Good-night; go, all of you." She drew out her purse. "Here," she added, "is something as a welcome to my service."

A joyous murmur — a mode of thanks used by well-bred servants — was the only answer, the last word of the valets. All disappeared, bowing to the floor. Jeanne overheard their remarks as they went away; they were saying to one another that fortune had given them a fanciful mistress. When the noise of their voices and footsteps had died away, Jeanne locked the door, and exclaimed triumphantly, "Here I am, alone in my own house!" She lighted a candle in a three-branched candlestick, and bolted the massive door of the vestibule. Then ensued a silent, extraordinary scene, which would have highly interested one of those nocturnal spectators who, according to the fictions of the poet, hover over cities and palaces.

Jeanne was inspecting her possessions. She admired, room by room, all this house, the least detail of which had acquired in her eyes an immense value, now that to the curiosity of the visitor had succeeded the egotism of the proprietor.

The ground-floor included a bath-room, dining-room, three drawing-rooms, and two reception-rooms. The furniture of these rooms was in keeping with the luxuriousness of its owner. It was not new, and it was more pleasing to Jeanne than it would have been if procured expressly for her. All those rich antiques, disdained by women of fashion, the marvellous pieces of carved ebony, the glass lustres, the gothic clocks masterpieces of chasing and

enamel, the screens embroidered with Chinese figures, and the enormous Japanese vases filled with rare flowers, — excited the new proprietress to an ecstasy of delight that cannot be described. On a mantel-piece two gilded tritons bore branches of coral from which were suspended, as fruit, articles of jewelry at that time fashionable. On a gilded table with a white marble top was an immense elephant, sea-green, from whose ears hung pendants of sapphire, supporting a tower filled with the flasks of perfumes. Books for women, gilded and illustrated, were conspicuous on rosewood shelves, the corners of which were ornamented with arabesques of gold. A complete set of furniture covered with Gobelin tapestry, a triumph of patient work, which had cost one hundred thousand francs at the manufactory, adorned a small salon finished in gray and gold, on the walls of which every panel was an oblong canvas painted by Vernet or by Greuze. One small salon was richly ornamented with the best portraits by Chardin, and the finest terra-cottas by Clodion. Everything evinced, not the eagerness of a rich *parvenu* to gratify his caprices or those of his mistress, but the long and patient labor of those whose riches are of ancient date, who add to the treasures received from their fathers other treasures to be handed down to their children.

Jeanne examined everything in detail. Then as her domino annoyed her, and her whalebone bodice was too tight, she went into her bedroom, quickly undressed, and slipped on a robe of wadded silk. Shivering, half-naked in the silk which caressed her bosom and her waist, her vigorous and finely proportioned leg rounding out the folds of her short robe, she boldly ascended the stairs, carrying her light in her hand. Familiarized with the solitude, and having no fear of encountering the gaze even of a servant, she bounded from room to room, permitting

her light robe to flutter in the wind which blew in under the doors, and which, ten times in ten minutes, lifted it to the height of her charming knees. When she raised her arm to open a closet door, and the robe opened sufficiently to disclose the white roundness of the shoulder, of that dazzling tint so familiar in the paintings of Rubens, then the invisible spirits concealed under the draperies, or lurking behind the painted panels, must have rejoiced at having in their possession so beautiful a hostess, who thought that she was their possessor.

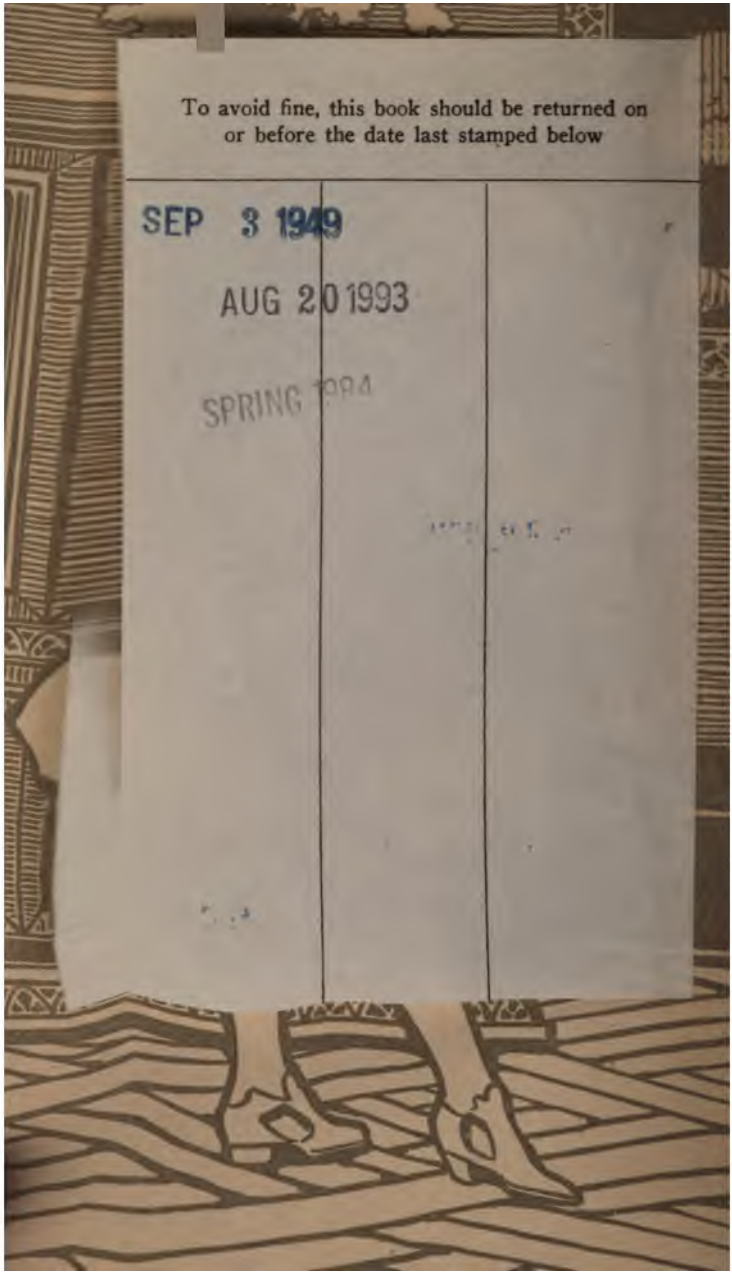
At length, after roaming through all the house, exhausted, breathless, her candle nearly consumed, she returned to her bedroom, hung with blue satin, and embroidered with large, fantastic flowers. She had seen everything, had admired everything; there was now nothing else for her to admire but herself. Suddenly her eyes fell on a marble Endymion — a delicate and voluptuous figure by Bouchardon — falling, intoxicated with love, on a block of porphyry. She closed the door and the portières of her chamber, drew the heavy window-curtains, and went back to the statue, devouring with her gaze the beautiful lover of Diana, who had given him a last kiss as she ascended toward the sky.

Jeanne felt under her feet the soft wool of the thick carpet; her legs trembled and bent under her; a languor which was induced neither by fatigue nor by sleepiness pervaded her frame and weighed upon her eyelids, while a heat which did not come from the fireplace ascended from her feet through all her body, and filled her veins with that living electricity which is called love.

At the moment of these extraordinary sensations Jeanne perceived herself in a pier-glass placed behind the statue of Endymion. Her robe had fallen from her shoulders to the carpet. The fine cambric, dragged down by the heavier

silk, had fallen to the middle of her white and rounded arms. Two black eyes, soft with languor, brilliant with desire, — the eyes of Jeanne herself, — thrilled her to the depths of her heart. She saw that she was beautiful; she felt that she was young and ardent; she said to herself that in all that surrounded her nothing was so worthy of love, — not even Diana. She approached the marble to see if Endymion would not awake to life, and for the mortal disdain the goddess. She became intoxicated with the transport; she leaned her head toward her shoulder with a strange trembling, and applied her lips to the palpitating flesh. While she still gazed into the reflection of herself in the mirror, suddenly her eyes closed, her head drooped forward upon her breast, and sighing, she fell on the bed, without consciousness and without apparent life.

The candle shot forth a last ray of light from the midst of melted wax, and then yielded its last perfume with its last spark.



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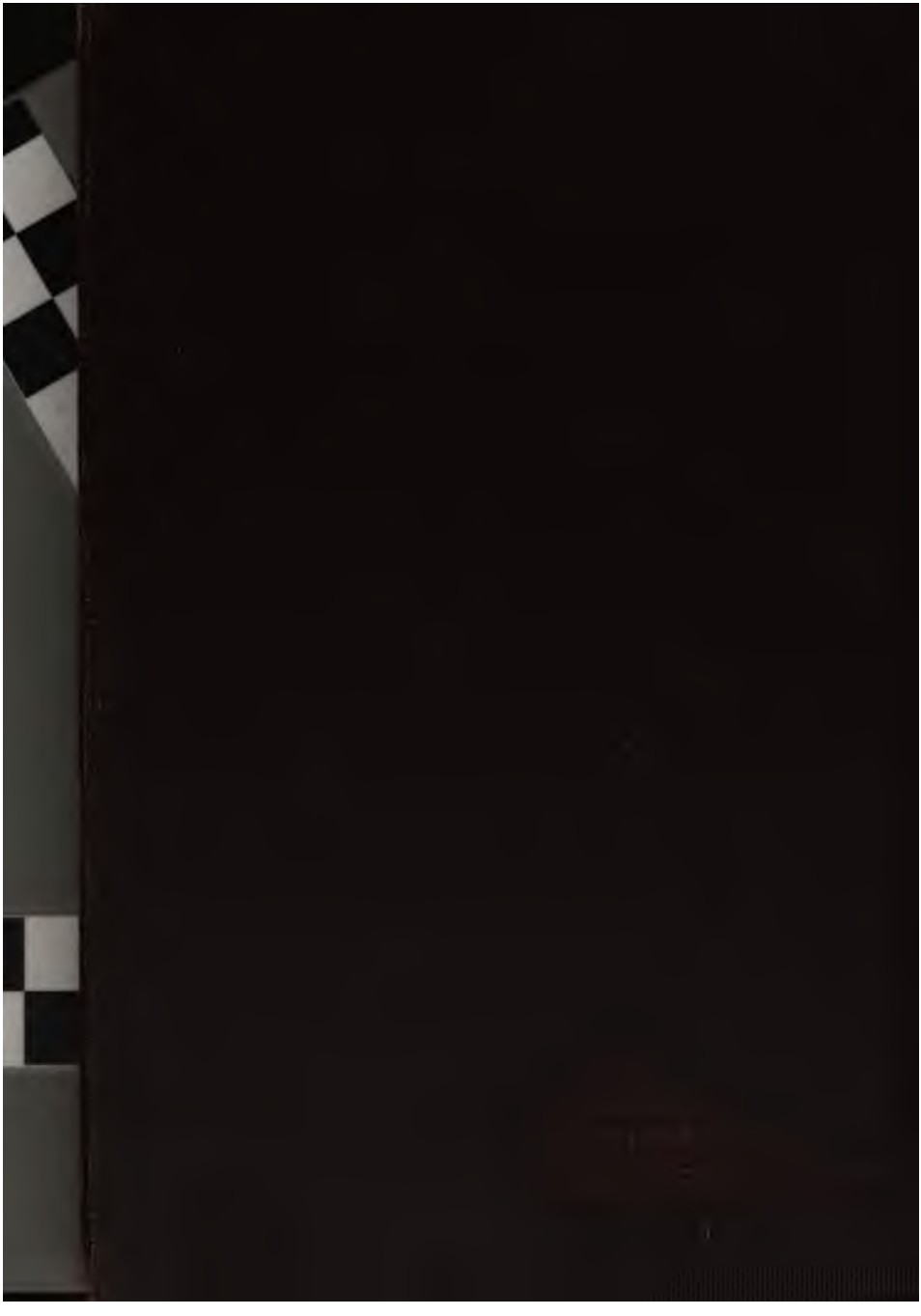
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